



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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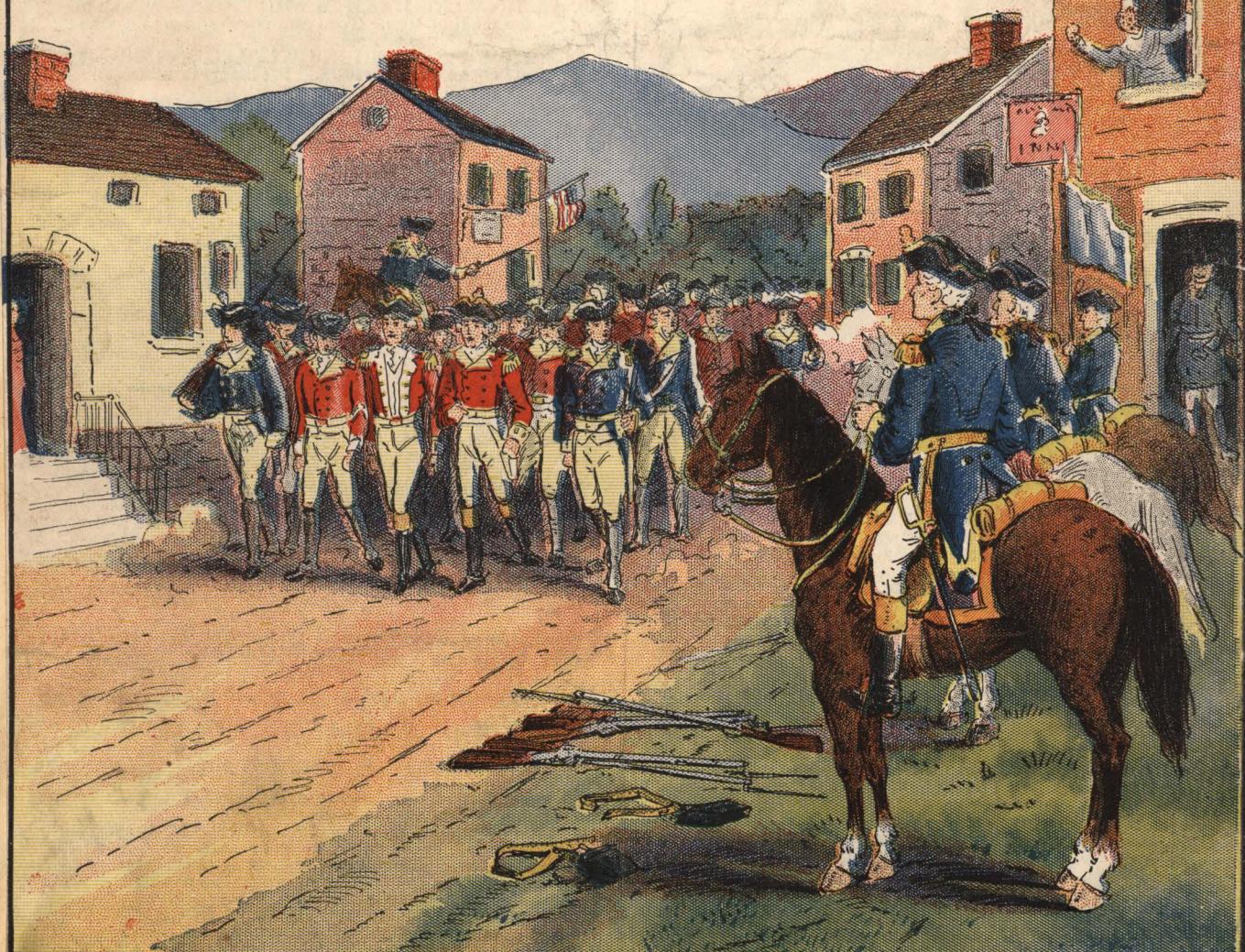
NEW YORK, OCTOBER 25, 1901.

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CHAPTER I.

THE PRISONER.

"Shoot him!"

"Hang him!"

It was mid-afternoon of the 22d of May, 1781.

The main street of the town of Petersburg, Virginia, was the scene of considerable excitement.

A party consisting of a dozen British soldiers had just ridden into Petersburg.

The soldiers in their brilliant scarlet uniforms made a brave and imposing showing, but it was not to them to which attention was most attracted.

In the midst of the redcoats, mounted upon the back of a magnificent black horse, was a young man of seemingly about twenty-one years of age.

In spite of the young man's dress, which was a suit of rough homespun, worn and frayed, an old slouch hat and rough cowhide shoes, it could be easily seen that he was no ordinary youth.

The firm, square chin, the handsome face, the keen, piercing eyes proved the young man to be shrewd and brave.

The young man's arms were bound together behind his back.

He was a prisoner.

The redcoats had taken him by surprise a mile out from Petersburg and had captured him and brought him into the town.

The word had gone out that a "rebel" spy had been captured and a crowd quickly gathered.

So great was the crowd that the party of redcoats had hard work making their way down the street.

General Cornwallis, with five thousand British troops, had entered and occupied Petersburg two days before.

At his coming the majority of the patriot residents of Petersburg had fled from the town.

This left the place in possession of the British and Tories, and the result was that the majority of the people in the crowd, pressing around the redcoats and their prisoner, were redcoats or citizens in sympathy with the British.

Hence the cries of "Shoot him!" "Hang him!" "Kill the spy!"

The prisoner did not seem to be alarmed by the cries.

He gazed about him, upon the angry faces of the members of the mob, in a calm and unmoved manner.

"By jove! young fellow," remarked one of the redcoats who rode beside the youth, "if those people could get hold of you, it would go hard with you."

"No doubt of it," was the quiet reply; "the members of a mob like that have no sense whatever."

"You're right; they act first and think afterward."

"Some of them are hardly capable of thinking at any time," said the youth, his lip curling with scorn.

"Well, now, I don't know but you are right about that."

"Where are you taking me?" the youth asked.

"To headquarters."

"To headquarters?"

"Yes."

"Where is that?"

"Down the street a ways; do you see that large brick building yonder?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is headquarters."

"Ah!"

"General Cornwallis has his headquarters there, you know, as also the members of his staff."

"Oh, that's it?"

A peculiar light shone in the eyes of the young man.

Involuntarily he made a move as if to try to free his arms and looked about him.

The redcoat noticed this.

"Oh, you can't get away," he laughed.

"You're right about that, I judge," was the calm reply; "but why are you taking me to headquarters?"

"Oh, we want General Cornwallis to see you."

"Why so?"

"Well, we think that in you we have captured a dangerous rebel spy and that General Cornwallis will wish to interview you."

"Ah, I see."

The young man said no more, but looked about him with eyes that saw everything.

Nothing escaped him.

On none of the faces surrounding him, however, did he see a friendly look.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter," the young man said to himself; "if I had a score of friends in that crowd they could do nothing for me; I will just have to wait, make the best of the situation and trust to luck to enable me to get out of this scrape."

The party moved slowly onward down the street.

Presently it came to a stop in front of the building which the redcoats had pointed out as being the headquarters of General Cornwallis and his staff.

Four of the redcoats dismounted and assisted the prisoner to reach the ground.

Two of the soldiers took hold of Dick and with one in front and one bringing up the rear the little party entered the building.

The party had to wait a few minutes in a sort of reception room, and then was shown into a large room which was used as an office by General Cornwallis.

The officer was seated behind a table at one side of the room and was engaged in looking over some documents.

"Ah! who have you there?" he exclaimed on looking up and seeing the newcomers.

"It's a young fellow we found a mile out from town, your excellency," replied one of the redcoats; "we thought he looked like a suspicious character and so we captured him."

"That was right, quite right," said General Cornwallis, approvingly; "that is the way to do."

Then he pushed the documents to one side and looked long and searchingly at the prisoner.

"Well, young man, what have you to say for yourself?" he asked presently, in an abrupt way.

"I don't know that it would do much good to say anything," the youth replied quietly; "but I will say that your men have made a mistake."

"Oh, you think they have made a mistake, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"In capturing you?"

"That is what I think."

"Then you are not a spy?"

The young man shook his head.

"Oh, no," he replied.

"Then who and what are you?"

"My name is James Sanford and I live ten miles from here."

"Your name is James Sanford, eh?"

General Cornwallis spoke in a slow, deliberate manner and his eyes were studying the youth's face the while.

The young man nodded.

"Yes, that is my name," he replied.

A peculiar look came into the eyes of the British officer. The young man, who was a very keen observer, noticed it. He knew that something which the other considered would be crushing was about to be spoken and he mentally braced himself to withstand it.

"When did you change your name?" asked General Cornwallis, in a calm, cold tone of voice.

The young man looked surprised.

"I don't know what you mean, sir," he said.

"You do not?"

There was sarcasm in the officer's voice.

There was disbelief there, too.

"I do not."

"I think my words were plain enough," said General Cornwallis; "I asked you when you changed your name."

"I know you did, but I don't know what you mean."

The four soldiers eyed first the officer and then the young man in surprise.

They hardly knew what to think of the conversation.

"I dislike to dispute anyone's word, young man," said the officer, "but I must say that it is my belief that you do know what I mean."

"What makes you think so?" the young man asked.

There was a peculiar look in his eyes as he asked the question.

"It is not my habit to allow prisoners to ask questions," said the officer, with dignity; "but in this case, I will make an exception and answer your question. The reason I ask you when you changed your name was because I once knew you under another!"

The four redcoats uttered subdued exclamations of amazement.

The young man elevated his eyebrows.

A look of surprise came over his face.

If the surprise was not genuine, it certainly seemed to be.

"Surely you are mistaken, sir," the young man said.

General Cornwallis shook his head.

"Oh, no, I am not," he said positively.

"And you think you knew me at some time in the past?"

"I am sure of it."

"When, sir, if I may ask?"

The officer pondered a few moments.

"It was about two years ago," he said presently.

"Two years ago?"

"Yes."

A puzzled look was on the young man's face.

"And where was this?" he asked.

"Up in New York and also in New Jersey."

The puzzled look deepened on the young man's face.

He shook his head.

"I dislike to contradict anyone, sir," he said, "but I must say that you are mistaken."

"You think I am mistaken, eh?"

There was disbelief in the officer's tone.

"I am certain of it, sir; I was never in New York or New Jersey in my life."

General Cornwallis looked long and searchingly in the young man's face.

The prisoner met the gaze unflinchingly.

Presently General Cornwallis gave utterance to laughter.

There was a look of amusement and admiration on his face as he said:

"Young man, I will frankly acknowledge that you have my utmost admiration; you are certainly as cool and brave a man as lives on the face of the earth to-day; you are the same daring fellow you were two years ago, but your denial that you were ever in New York or New Jersey will avail you nothing, for—I know you!"

There was no mistaking the fact that General Cornwallis was in earnest.

He evidently believed that what he said was the truth.

The young man shook his head, however.

"I don't see how that can be possible, sir?" he remarked; "you surely must be mistaken."

The officer shook his head.

"No, I am not mistaken!" he declared; "I know you!"

The young man elevated his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders after the manner of the French.

"I see that you are honest in your belief that you know me, sir," he said, "and I must say that you have aroused a feeling of interest within me; I am curious to know who you think I am."

"Think is not the proper word; I know who you are and can tell you your real name; I have a good memory for faces and even though it has been two years since I saw you and you have changed considerably in that time, I was confident that I recognized you the instant I laid eyes upon you."

Again the youth shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, since you will have it that way," he said quietly, "what is my name? Who am I?"

Promptly came the answer:

"Your name is Dick Slater! and you are the young man known far and wide as 'The champion spy of the Revolution!'"

CHAPTER II.

A RAPPING AT THE WINDOW.

Exclamations of astonishment escaped the four soldiers.

They had often heard of Dick Slater, the patriot spy.

They had heard that he was the bravest, most daring man in the patriot army, and now, when they heard their commander say that this youth was Dick Slater, they stared at him with eager eyes.

Had they really succeeded in capturing this famous youth? they asked themselves; or, was General Cornwallis mistaken?

They gazed upon the youth with interest, thinking that they might be able to decide the matter by the young man's looks and actions.

They were disappointed, however.

When General Cornwallis told him his name was Dick Slater and that he was the famous rebel spy, the young man smiled and did not seem disconcerted.

"I suppose that there would be no use for me to try to persuade you that you have made a mistake?" the young man queried.

"Not a bit of use of your attempting to do so," was the prompt reply; "I know you, there is absolutely no doubt whatever regarding the matter; you are Dick Slater, the rebel spy, and I congratulate you, men," to the soldiers, "on having made this capture; it is an important one, I assure you."

"We are glad we captured him, your excellency," said one of the soldiers, while the other three nodded their heads to signify that they coincided with this statement.

General Cornwallis looked at the prisoner in a keen, searching manner.

"I suppose you are from Richmond, are you not?" he queried.

"I have told you where I came from," was the calm reply.

"Bah! I suppose you are down here to aid Lafayette, the tow-headed French boy, eh? Well, he will need help; I shall get after him soon and you may safely wager that I will make him wish he had remained in France and kept his nose out of affairs which do not concern him. I understand that he has a force of less than three thousand men, while I have nearly double that number."

"I assure you that I am unable to tell you how many men this man Lafayette has."

"You mean you won't tell,"

"Have it that way, if you like, sir; it would be useless for me to dispute your word."

"Utterly useless, Dick Slater; I know you and know that it would be folly to expect you to give me any information regarding the patriot army."

"I judge that is true; it is my opinion that if this fellow, Dick Slater, were here in my place, you would learn nothing from him."

"Bah! why attempt to deny your identity longer?" with a wave of the hand. "I know you—more, I know that I know you, and it is useless for you to attempt to deceive me."

Then he turned toward the soldiers and indicating the prisoner with a nod of the head, said:

"Search him, men; search him closely, for it may be possible that he has important papers upon his person."

The soldiers obeyed.

They searched the young man thoroughly.

They emptied every pocket and examined his clothing for secret pockets.

To no avail.

They found no papers or documents of any kind.

General Cornwallis looked somewhat disappointed, but made the best of the situation.

"I hardly expected that anything would be found," he said; "you are altogether too smart and too old a hand at spy work to be caught with incriminating documents on your person."

"I suppose that would be true of the person whom you take me to be," the youth replied.

"Bah!" exclaimed Cornwallis, testily. "Stop harping on that string. You are Dick Slater and all the denials in the world will do you no good."

"Have it so, if you wish; I will deny it no more, but to please you, will play that I am Dick Slater."

"Humph! there will be no acting about it."

General Cornwallis was silent for a few moments.

He seemed to be pondering deeply.

Presently he turned to the four soldiers.

"There are a number of unoccupied rooms upstairs," he said; "take the prisoner up there and put him in one of those rooms; leave his arms bound, lock the door and one of you remain on guard outside. This young man is one of the most slippery fellow in the world and has a reputation for getting out of tight places; keep your eyes open and don't let him escape."

"Very well, your excellency," one of the men replied; "we will see that he does not escape."

The soldiers conducted the prisoner out of the room, along a hallway and up a flight of stairs.

They made their way along the upstairs hall and paused in front of the door opening into the last room on the right hand side.

They opened the door.

The room was unoccupied.

"This will do as well as any," remarked one; "in with you."

This last was to the prisoner, and as he spoke he pushed the young man into the room.

"Force is entirely unnecessary, my friend," remarked the prisoner, coolly; "you do not need to push me; I am quite able to walk unaided."

"I guess you are, by jove!" was the reply in an admiring tone.

"But I don't think you will be after General Cornwallis gets through with you," from another.

"You think not?"

"That is what I think."

"You talk like a prophet."

"Well, I don't set up to be a prophet, neither am I, so far as I know, the son of a prophet, but I rather think it will turn out as I have said."

"You have a right to think so if you like," said the prisoner, coolly; "I rather think, though, that I will still be able to do something in the walking line, even after General Cornwallis gets through with me."

"Well, you are such a cool chap that a fellow can almost wish that such may prove to be the case, even though you are an enemy," said the redcoat in an admiring tone of voice.

"Thank you."

There were a couple of chairs, a table and a bed in the room.

The prisoner seated himself in one of the chairs.

"That's right, make yourself comfortable," said one of the soldiers, approvingly.

Then they withdrew from the room.

They locked the door and three took their departure, one remaining behind as a guard.

When the key grated in the lock, the look of cool unconcern which had rested on the face of the prisoner, disappeared and a sober look took its place.

The young man looked around him with searching eyes.

"Well, there is no disguising the fact that I am in an exceedingly tight place," thought the young man; "General Cornwallis recognized me, as I feared he would do, and my attempt to make him think he was mistaken, failed utterly; he knows I am Dick Slater and the indications are that unless I in some manner manage to escape, I will be shot or hung."

The young man was indeed Dick Slater, the famous patriot scout and spy.

In the patriot army was a company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

Dick Slater was the captain of this company.

"The Liberty Boys" had been in the patriot army nearly five years, and during that time they had done wonderful work for the cause of Liberty.

As General Cornwallis had stated, Lafayette with three thousand men was at Richmond.

The traitor, Arnold, now in command of a British force, had been burning and pillaging in Virginia and General Washington had sent Lafayette down to put a stop to this.

Dick Slater and the "Liberty Boys" had begged to be allowed to go down and assist Lafayette, and the commander-in-chief had consented.

This is how it happened that Dick Slater was in the South.

Lafayette, knowing Dick's wonderful reputation as a scout and spy, and desiring to, if possible, learn the plans of General Cornwallis, who had just taken up quarters at Petersburg, about twenty miles south of Richmond, asked the youth to go there on a spying expedition.

Dick was glad to do so.

He had mounted and set out.

All went well with him until he was within a mile of Petersburg.

Then, as he was passing through a little strip of timber, a dozen British troopers suddenly dashed out from among the trees and surrounded him.

They had their pistols drawn and leveled, and the youth, brave even to rashness, though he was, realizing that it would be utter folly to attempt to resist, surrendered.

He was taken to Petersburg, a prisoner, as we have seen.

What happened after that up to the present moment, the reader knows.

Dick realized that he was in a tight place.

He felt certain that unless he escaped he would be put to death.

But how was he to escape?

That was the question, and it was one not easy to answer.

Dick was not the youth to despair, however.

He would not give up until he was forced to do so.

He made the best of the situation and took things as easy as possible, until evening came.

After he had eaten a hearty supper, food having been brought to him, at supper time, Dick felt better, and when the man had gone and he was again alone, he breathed a sigh of satisfaction and said to himself:

"I feel better. Jove! how I wish I could get out of here. I fancy the redcoats would be surprised if they were to come to this room in the morning and find me gone."

There were no shutters to the window, and walking over to it, Dick looked out.

He could not see much of anything, for it was not dark and in addition, a large tree stood opposite the window.

As Dick approached the window, he was treated to a surprise.

There was a rapping sound as of some one tapping the window with his knuckles, and then in a cautious voice, the words came to Dick's ears:

"I have come to rescue you! I will have the window up and be in the room with you in a moment!"

CHAPTER III.

NEW FOUND FRIENDS.

Dick was astonished.

He had not supposed that he had a friend in Petersburg. But it seemed as though he had.

The youth was glad to learn this.

He was young, and loved life.

He was not ready to die yet.

So he wished to get away, and escape the rope or bullet which would be meted out to him if he remained.

"I can't help you get in," he replied in a cautious voice; "my hands are bound."

"I can get in without help," came the reply.

Then the window began to move slowly upward.

"Be careful not to make any more noise than possible," cautioned Dick; "there is a man on guard just outside the door of this room."

"I'll be careful," was the reply.

There was no light in Dick's room, so neither he nor his new friend could see each other.

Presently the window was up as far as it would go, and then Dick was enabled to just make out a human form on the outside.

The person, whoever he was, was perched on a limb of the tree, which extended almost to the window.

The newcomer now reached across, and climbed carefully through the window.

A few moments later he stood beside Dick.

"I'll cut your bonds," he whispered, "and then we will be ready to get away from here."

He was as good as his word.

In another moment Dick's arms were free.

The youth stretched his arms out, and drew a breath of relief.

"I feel better," he said in a whisper; "thanks for your kindness!"

"Don't speak of it," was the reply; "let us be getting away from here. There is a large limb of that tree within reach of the window; do you think you can get out in that manner?"

"Oh, yes; I am a good climber."

"Good! Come, then."

The other took the lead, and climbed out through the window.

It was more difficult getting back onto the limb than it had been to get from the limb in through the window, but the attempt was successful, and then Dick followed his friend.

The two made their way along the limb till they reached the body of the tree.

Just as they did so, they heard the door of the room which they had just left open.

The room was made light as the door opened, there being a man there with a candle in his hand.

He entered the room, and gave utterance to a wild cry as he did so.

"The prisoner has escaped!" he yelled; "quick! sound the alarm! He must not be allowed to escape!"

The man who was with him, turned and ran back along the hall, while the one with the candle approached the window.

"He has reached the tree, and climbed down that way," the two fugitives heard the fellow say.

"I wonder, now, if he could be in the tree at this moment!"

The redcoat flashed the light from the candle into the treetop as well as he could, but the tree was filled with foliage, and the two, shielding themselves behind the body of the tree, were not seen.

Then a happy thought came to the redcoat.

"It will arouse the men, and bring them to the scene, even if it does no other good," he exclaimed; "so I'll do it!"

He drew a pistol as he spoke.

The two, peering around the body of the tree, saw this move, and lost no time in shielding their persons as much as possible.

Up came the arm of the redcoat, and then crack! the pistol rang out.

The bullet struck the body of the tree, at the point where Dick was sheltered, and imbedded itself in the wood.

"There, that was all right," the redcoat remarked in a tone of satisfaction; "there will be a lot of the boys here in a few moments, sure. I'll try one more shot, though I guess the fugitive has already got down out of the tree."

He drew another pistol, leveled it and fired.

Crack!

The bullet missed the main body of the tree, this time, and whistled past Dick's right ear.

"I guess he won't fire any more shots, now, as he has emptied his pistols," thought Dick; "then he began working his way downward, his hearing apprising him of the fact that his companion was doing the same thing.

They were careful to make as little noise as possible, but the redcoat in the window must have been possessed of sharp hearing, for he suddenly cried out:

"The rebel is in the tree yet! Good! We'll capture him again! He won't be able to get away!"

Then he lifted up his voice and began yelling at the top of his voice:

"This way!" he shouted; "come in a hurry, and you will be in time to head the rebel off! Hurry!"

The fugitives, knowing that their presence in the tree had been discovered, and realizing that they had not much time to spare, now made their way down to the ground as rapidly as possible.

As they reached the ground, they heard the sound of footsteps.

"Some one is coming!" Dick's friend whispered; "we must get away from here in a hurry. Come!"

He seized Dick by the arm, and led the way across what was evidently a back yard.

In one corner of the yard a dark building loomed up.

The two reached this building, just at the same time that the man whose footsteps they had heard climbed over the back fence.

The redcoat in the window of the room Dick had escaped from kept on yelling.

He did his best to explain the situation, but was excited, and made a botch of it.

Others were approaching the spot, however, and the two fugitives knew that they were in great danger.

"Come in here," whispered Dick's companion; "it is a stable, but there are no horses in it now."

He opened the door, as he spoke, and they entered, the door being pulled shut after them.

"There is an alley at the rear," the friend explained; "there is a door at the back of the stable, and we will wait till our enemies have passed, and entered the yard, and then we will open the door, slip out into the alley, and get away from here in a hurry."

"That is a good plan," said Dick approvingly.

The two made their way slowly and carefully through the stable, and to the rear, where there was a door.

The voice of the redcoat in the window of the room they had left a few moments before could still be heard.

The footsteps of men running could be heard, also, as the men passed the stable.

The two waited till they heard the sound of excited talking in the yard they had just left, and then they opened the door and looked out into the alley.

They could see no signs of anyone in the vicinity, and they quickly stepped out into the alley, and pulled the door shut.

As they did so they heard a voice say:

"Perhaps the rebel spy has taken refuge in the stable!"

This was the signal for the two to move away from the vicinity.

"Come!" Dick's companion whispered.

They moved down the alley as rapidly as they dared.

They were soon at the cross street.

They turned down it, it being not lighted, and walked rapidly.

They met one or two persons, but as they were now away from the scene of the excitement, they were not interfered with.

"What's the excitement over yonder?" one man asked.

"The rebel spy that they had prisoner has escaped, I believe," replied Dick.

"Oh, is that it?"

"Yes."

"Jove! that is bad! I was promising myself that I would get to see him hung!"

"Well, they'll have to catch him before hanging him, now," was Dick's calm reply.

Then he and his companion moved on, the stranger doing the same.

"He little suspects that he was talking with the rebel spy!" murmured Dick's companion, with a chuckle.

"You are right," replied Dick; "I judge he would feel like giving utterance to an oath or two if he knew the truth."

"No doubt of it!"

The two kept on going, Dick leaving himself to the guidance of his companion.

He judged that his friend was a citizen of Petersburg, and knew what he was about, and in this he was right.

They walked onward perhaps ten or a dozen blocks, and finally came to a stop in front of a house which stood back from the street and in among some trees.

Dick's companion opened the gate and entered.

"Come," he said; "you are safe, now."

Dick obeyed.

He stepped through the gateway, into the yard, and then his companion closed the gate and led the way up a path, and to the house.

As they drew near the house, they became aware of the fact that the front door was open, and that a little group of people was out in the front of the house.

"Is that you, Harry?" queried a voice.

It was a woman's voice and was eager and trembling.

"Yes, it is I, mother," the youth—for such his voice proclaimed him to be—who was with Dick replied.

"Oh, I am so glad you got back in safety! And did you ——"

"I was successful! I rescued the prisoner, and he is here with me! But we had better go in the house; the redcoats are up in arms, and some of them might wander down this way."

"Yes, yes! we will go in the house at once! Come!"

When all had entered the house, the front door was made fast and then they entered a large room, in which a couple of candles were burning.

The shades were drawn, so no one could see in.

As may be supposed Dick looked at his companions with interest.

He saw a man of perhaps forty-five years, a woman of perhaps forty, a youth of about nineteen or twenty and a maiden of perhaps seventeen.

The man and woman were undoubtedly man and wife, and the youth and maiden their children.

The youth it was who had rescued Dick, and the latter seized the young fellow by the hand and shook it warmly.

"You have saved my life, in all probability," he said, earnestly, "and I thank you! You may be sure that I appreciate what you have done, and if I ever get the chance I will cancel the debt which I owe you!"

The youth flushed with pleasure.

"Don't say a word," he said, deprecatingly; "I am well repaid in knowing that I have been instrumental in saving to the great cause so valuable an adherent as yourself. But allow me to make you acquainted with my parents and sister. Father, this is Dick Slater, the patriot scout and spy."

"I am indeed glad to meet you!" the man said; "my name, as Harry, here, forgot to tell you, is Murray, Nathan Murray."

"I am glad to know you, Mr. Murray," said Dick, shaking the man's hand; "I esteem it an honor to make the acquaintance of the parents and sister of as brave a youth as is your son Harry!"

"Oh, come, come!" protested the youth; "don't talk that

way, Dick! You will make me vain, and sis says I am troubled that way, already."

"I guess she doesn't mean it, though," smiled Dick.

He then shook hands with Mrs. Murray and Nellie, Harry's sister.

She was as beautiful and sweet a girl as Dick had ever seen.

She blushed when she shook hands with Dick, and this made her look prettier than ever.

"What a sweet girl!" thought Dick; "this is indeed a nice family."

"Be seated," invited Mrs. Murray, and then all sat down. Then Dick looked inquiringly at the youth.

"How happens it that you came to my rescue?" he asked.

"Why, you see, I was in the crowd when you were brought into town," was the reply; "and I made up my mind right away that I would rescue you if it was possible to do so."

"He came home almost exhausted from running," explained Mrs. Murray; "he told us all about your being captured, and how you were Dick Slater, the patriot spy, and although we did not think he could succeed in rescuing you, we would not tell him he should not make the attempt. We cautioned him to be very careful, and then let him go."

"How did you know I was in that room where you found me?" asked Dick, addressing Harry.

"I didn't know it till after I got up in the tree."

"You didn't?"

"No; you see, it was my intention to enter the house by way of the window opening into that room, and then I would have tried to find you and free you; you may be sure I was glad when I saw you through the window. I was there before it was dark, you know, and could see into the room."

"I understand; well, Harry, you are a brave youth. You would rank right up along with any of my 'Liberty Boys'."

The youth laughed, and flushed in an embarrassed way.

"Don't talk that way, Dick!" he exclaimed; "I didn't do so very much, and the danger wasn't great."

"There was considerable danger. Didn't that fellow fire two shots into the treetop while we were still there?"

"Yes, but——"

"Goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Murray; "was that what the shooting was about? We heard it!"

"Yes," replied Dick; "a redcoat entered the room soon after we left it, and discovered my escape. He raised the window and fired two pistol shots into the top of the tree. The bullets came uncomfortably near."

Exclamations escaped Mrs. Murray and Nellie.

"You were in great danger, then, sure enough!" the girl exclaimed.

"Oh, yes; but it is nothing when one gets used to it," smiled Dick. Then to Mr. Murray he said:

"How happens it that you remain in Petersburg, sir? I supposed that all patriot families had fled."

"We did think of going, when the British army was reported to be coming," was the reply, "but I decided that if we were careful, and kept out of the way as much as possible we would be safe in remaining, so we did so."

"Aren't you afraid you may get yourselves in trouble by harboring me?" Dick asked; "perhaps I had better go at once."

Mr. Murray was just going to answer when all were startled by the sound of loud, imperious rapping on the front door.

CHAPTER IV.

AN INTERRUPTION.

"There they are, now!" said Dick, in a low, cautious tone; "in some manner the redcoats have tracked Harry and I here!"

Mr. Murray shook his head.

"I hardly think that," he said.

Then he turned to Harry.

"Take Dick down into the cellar," he said; "there is a good hiding place there—you know where. Haste!"

"Yes, hurry!" said Mrs. Murray and Nellie in a breath. Harry motioned to Dick to follow him, and stole out of the room.

Dick was close at the youth's heels.

They made their way along the hall, till they were well toward the rear of the house.

The rapping was being kept up on the front door.

It was growing louder and more imperative.

Mr. Murray had stepped out into the hall, but he was standing, waiting for the youths to get out of sight before going to the door.

Harry opened a door on the right hand side of the hall and passed through into the room beyond.

Dick followed and then Harry closed the door.

It was dark within the room.

Harry knew his way, however, and taking Dick by the arm, led him across the room.

Dick heard his companion open a door and felt a rush of cool air.

"This is the cellar stairway," whispered Harry; "go on down, but be careful and don't fall."

"All right."

He stepped through the doorway and made his way down the steps leading into the cellar.

Harry followed, closing the door.

As they reached the bottom of the steps, they heard the sound of tramping feet and voices.

"Father has let those people in, whoever they are," said Harry; "shall we hide in the cellar or go out of doors?"

"Is there an outside cellarway?" asked Dick.

"Yes; it leads up into the back yard."

"Let's get out of here, then; I'll feel safer out of doors."

"There's a good hiding place down here, Dick."

"That may be, but I would feel cooped up; let's get out while we can."

"All right, just as you say; this way."

Harry opened a door at the rear of the cellar and the youths passed through the doorway.

Harry closed the door and the two made their way up the steps and emerged into the back yard.

Here they stood still and listened.

The youths listened a few moments, and then made their way around to the front of the house.

The front door stood partly open.

They slipped up to it, and peered in.

They saw a couple of redcoats in the hall. Mr. Murray was with them.

The redcoats seemed to be threatening Harry's father.

"I tell you, I saw two persons enter the yard!" the youths heard one of the redcoats say; "and then, when I met the other boys, and they said the rebel spy had escaped, I became suspicious that one of the two I had seen was the spy. I think so yet; he must be in the house somewhere, and we will find him!"

"You are entirely mistaken regarding the rebel spy being here," said Mr. Murray; "of course, I do not say you did not see two persons enter the yard, for without doubt you are speaking the truth, but they did not enter this house. They are not here."

"I think you are lying!" the redcoat replied insultingly, "and we will soon prove it, too!"

"I don't think you will do anything of the kind," was the reply of Mr. Murray in a dignified tone of voice; "you are entirely at liberty to search the house."

"At liberty—bah! We will search whether we are at liberty or not, my friend!" the redcoat cried, insolently; "and that is the kind of men we are!"

"Yes, that's the kind of cowards you are!" grated Harry. Dick, who had his hand on his companion's arm, could

feel the youth trembling, and he knew that it was with anger, not with fear.

"Slowly, Harry, slowly!" breathed Dick in his companion's ear; "don't jump in there. I don't think they will offer violence to your father, but if they do, we will go in and give them a taste of our quality."

The two redcoats in the hall were not the only ones in the house.

There were two more in the cellar, and two upstairs.

They were searching the house thoroughly.

They spent nearly an hour at the work, but finally gathered in a group in the hall and had to acknowledge that they were baffled.

"I told you the persons you saw did not enter the house," said Mr. Murray; "they probably went through the yard and across to the next street, and away in that direction."

"Perhaps so," was the dubious reply.

It was evident that the redcoats who had seen the youths enter the yard hated to give up the idea that they were in the house.

"Did you look good, everywhere?" he asked, turning to his comrades.

"Yes," replied one; "we looked everywhere, and made a thorough search. They are not in the house."

"Nor in the cellar?"

Another redcoat answered.

"No! Then, I guess the only thing for us to do is to take our departure," in a sullen, disappointed voice; "come along, boys."

The party of six redcoats came tramping toward the front door, and the youths lost no time in retreating from in front of it.

They had taken not half a dozen steps backward, when they felt themselves seized from behind!

CHAPTER V.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

The youths were taken entirely by surprise.

Naturally enough, they were startled.

They did not cry out, however.

They knew this would only work against them, in that it would bring the redcoats from the house on the double-quick.

So they whirled and grappled with the persons who had seized hold of them.

There were only two of these.

One had seized Dick, the other had seized Harry.

The youths struggled desperately.

They realized that unless they escaped from the clutches of their opponents before the redcoats emerged from the house, they would quickly be overpowered.

So they fought like fiends.

Harry was virtually a novice at this sort of thing, but he was proving himself to be a dangerous fellow to fool with.

Dick quickly got the upper hand of the man who had leaped upon him, and whirling the fellow over, dealt him a couple of terrific blows on the jaw, rendering him unconscious.

Then he leaped to Harry's assistance, to find that his comrade had got the better of his assailant, and was choking him into insensibility.

Dick dealt the fellow a severe blow on the jaw, knocking him senseless, and then as the door of the house came open and the redcoats emerged the youths leaped to their feet and dashed away.

The redcoats caught a glimpse of the youths, and gave utterance to shouts of excitement.

"There they go, now!" cried one; "after them, boys! Stop! or we will fire!" the last to the fleeing youths, of course.

But the fugitives did not stop.

They ran faster, if possible.

The redcoats drew their pistols as they ran, and fired.

The bullets flew past the youths, and Harry uttered an exclamation.

"Are you hit?" asked Dick, solicitously.

"A scratch, that is all—on the arm," was the reply.

Onward sped the youths.

After them came the redcoats.

Dick fell behind Harry.

He had a double purpose in this.

He wished to shield his comrade's body with his own, so that in case the redcoats fired any more, Harry would not be so likely to be hit.

"It is my affair, and not his, and it would be a shame to let him get hurt," thought Dick; "he is a brave fellow, and I will look out for his safety if I can."

The other reason was that Harry knew the best way to go in order to shake the redcoats off.

He told Harry this was the reason he had fallen back.

He knew that if Harry was to suspect that Dick was behind him for the purpose of shielding him from the bullets he would refuse to remain in the lead.

As it happened the youth did not think of this; in fact he

did not think about Dick being exactly behind him, so he kept in advance.

Suddenly there came the sharp crack! crack! of the pistols.

The redcoats had fired another volley.

The bullets whistled past Dick and Harry.

None took effect, however, and the youths ran onward at their best speed.

Harry took such a course that it would ultimately bring them around on the street back of his home, but of course he would make a wide circuit first.

It would be necessary to get clear from the redcoats before venturing back to the house.

Harry had no notion of leading the enemy back there.

So he kept on in nearly a straight line till they were so far ahead that the redcoats could not see them, and then he and Dick turned down a side street, and ran in this direction a distance of four or five blocks.

Here the two paused and listened.

"Do you hear anything of them, Dick?" asked Harry, when they had listened a few moments.

"No, do you?"

"No; but I thought your hearing might be better, or at least better trained than mine."

"I don't hear anything, so I judge that we have given our pursuers the slip."

"I hope so!"

"So do I."

"Perhaps it would be a good plan to wait here a few moments, to see whether or not we really have gotten away from them?"

This in a questioning tone.

"Yes, I think that will be a good idea."

They waited for perhaps five minutes, listening intently the while.

"Surely if they were on our track they would have put in an appearance before this," said Harry.

"Yes; I think we have given them the slip, sure enough."

"And do you think it will be safe for us to return to my home?"

"Well, I'm not so sure of that, Harry," was the reply; "it would be just like those redcoats to go back and place a guard on the house."

"That is what I thought; and if we were to go back, they

—

"Would get us, after all!"

"So they would. Well, what shall we do?"

Dick was silent for a few moments.

"I really don't know what to do, but I have gotten you

into trouble, and I am not the kind of fellow to go away and leave you to get out as best you can."

"Oh, you needn't worry about me," was the prompt reply; "I will get along all right."

"Perhaps so, but I would like to be sure of it before going my way and leaving you."

"Say," said Harry, reflectively; "I suppose you are in Petersburg for the purpose of securing information regarding the redcoats and what they intend doing?"

"That is exactly what I am here for, Harry."

"And I suppose you do not wish to leave town till you have succeeded in doing this?"

"You are right."

"All right; I know what we will do, then. I dare not venture back home, so we will remain together, and I know a splendid place to go—a place where we will be safe, I am confident."

"Where is the place you speak of, Harry?"

"It is an old, deserted house over in the edge of the town."

"A deserted house, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, that will just about fill the bill; sure enough; let's go there at once."

"All right, come."

The youths set out.

They did not hurry.

They moved at a moderate pace.

They did not know but that they might encounter some redcoats.

Now that they had succeeded in shaking their enemies off, they did not wish to be bothered by them again.

They kept a sharp lookout as they walked along.

Whenever they came to a cross street, they paused and looked, to see that there were no British soldiers coming.

Presently they came to the edge of the town.

In front of them was a strip of timber.

"This is the creek," said Harry; "the house is a little ways back in the timber, and right on the creek bank."

They kept on.

A few moments later and they were standing in front of an old, gloomy-looking house.

It was a story and a half high.

It was so dark that the youths could not see very well, but anyone would have known that the house was deserted.

That there were numerous loose boards about the house was proven by the cracking, which was going on almost constantly.

"Well, this isn't a pleasant place," said Dick; "but I sup-

pose it will be all the better for our purpose on that account."

"Yes, I judge so; it certainly isn't a very pleasant place. It is said that the house is haunted."

"Ah, indeed?"

"Yes."

"By what is it said to be haunted?"

"By the spirit of a man who once lived there. His name was Samuel Condon, and he was an old miser. He was murdered for his money, and it is said that his spirit haunts the place."

"Ah, I see!"

"That was a great while ago, you know; I know nothing about the affair, save from hearsay; my father knew the man."

"Well, I am not afraid of the ghost, are you?"

"No, I don't think I am; I am willing to risk encountering it, anyway."

"Good! we'll go inside the house, then."

The youths advanced to the door and opened it.

It was not fastened and came open readily.

The youths entered the house.

Scarcely had they set foot within doors when they were startled by a blood-curdling shriek.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GHOST PUT TO FLIGHT.

"What was that!" exclaimed Harry, in an awed voice.

"You can't prove it by me!" replied Dick; "it sounded like the shriek of some one in terrible agony."

Of course, both spoke in low tones, for they knew not what might result from the strange affair.

The youths were brave, however.

They made no move toward leaving the house.

They were determined to stand their ground.

They stood stock still and listened.

Again that terrible, blood-curdling shriek came to their ears.

Harry clutched Dick's arm and squeezed it nervously.

"It sounded upstairs," he whispered.

"So it did," replied Dick in a cautious undertone; "let's go upstairs and investigate."

"Jove! Dick, we don't know what we may find up there."

"That is true."

"Yet you wish to go upstairs and investigate?"

"Yes; you see I am like a woman, possessed of consider-

able curiosity, and I wish to probe this mystery and find who or what it was that gave utterance to those shrieks, if such a thing is possible. You can stay down here, if you like, Harry."

"Not I," was the reply; "if you go, I'll go! I have a good bit of curiosity myself."

"Good for you, Harry," said Dick approvingly; "you are the right kind of a comrade to have; come along and be on the lookout for trouble."

"The stairs go up from the next room, Dick," said Harry.

"Ah, you've been here before, then?"

"Yes, in the daytime, never at night."

"Well, lead the way into the other room and to the stairway, then I will go in front and if the ghost gets anybody it will be me."

"This way," said Harry.

He felt his way slowly across the room and Dick, holding to his arm, kept close beside him.

They soon found the doorway and passed through into the other room.

They made their way across the floor of this room and soon reached the foot of the stairs.

They started up the stairs which creaked beneath their weight.

At the same instant another shriek even more blood-curdling than the other two was heard and voluntarily the youths paused.

"Say, that was about the worst thing in the way of a shriek that I ever heard," said Dick in a quizzical tone of voice.

He spoke loud enough so that his voice might easily be heard upstairs.

"You are right!" replied Harry, in a low tone.

He was surprised that Dick should speak so loudly, but said nothing to that effect.

He had the utmost faith in Dick, and believed that his companion knew what he was about.

"I suppose you are wondering why I have spoken out loud, Harry?" remarked Dick.

Harry was surprised that the other should seemingly have read his thoughts.

"Yes," was the reply; "I will admit that I was a bit surprised."

"Well, it is simple enough: If there is a real ghost upstairs, we cannot deceive it—isn't that right?"

"Yes."

"And if it isn't a real ghost, it is some one playing ghost; that someone knows we are here, so it is equally as useless for us to try to keep silent."

"That is true, also; do you think—"

"I think that the ghost is no ghost at all, and that some one is upstairs, and is trying to frighten us away by uttering those blood-curdling shrieks."

"Go away, foolish humans!" cried a hoarse, sepulchral voice at this instant; "go away, or you will regret it! I am the spirit of Samuel Condon!—ha! ha! ha!"

The voice came from somewhere upstairs, and ended in a burst of wild laughter that, coming to their ears in the darkness, made the youths shudder slightly in spite of themselves.

They set their teeth together, however.

"You may be what you claim to be," replied Dick, grimly; "but we are not willing to take your word for it. We are going to investigate, if we die for it!"

"That will be your fate!—you will die, if you persist in intruding here! Be warned, and go your way!"

"We can't oblige you," replied Dick; "we are stubborn fellows, you know, and won't go till we have to." Then to Harry he said:

"Have you a pistol, Harry?"

"No," was the reply.

"Here, then, take one of mine. We will come right on up and see you," this in a louder voice, "and while admitting that, if you are a ghost, you may be able to get the better of us, we will say further that if you are not a ghost, but some one masquerading here to frighten people away, it will go hard with you, and we will undoubtedly get the better of you. Look out for yourself, and don't say that we didn't give you fair warning!"

"Foolish humans, beware!"

This was uttered in a loud, wailing tone of voice.

"We are just human and foolish enough not to beware," retorted Dick; "we are coming right up there, now, so look out."

As he finished speaking, Dick leaped up the stairs, Harry following closely.

They made considerable noise.

The youths hardly knew what to expect.

They had steeled their nerves, however, and were ready for anything.

If they were to encounter a real ghost, they would make it as lively for his Ghostship as they could, and if it was some one playing ghost, they would make him wish that he had turned his attention to some other line of business.

They reached the top of the stairs without meeting with anything at all calculated to impede their progress.

On the landing the youths paused.

They heard the sound of hurrying footsteps.

The footsteps suddenly ceased and a sound as though a window was being raised was heard.

This was followed by a sort of scrambling noise and then a loud slam as if the window had fallen.

"It was a human and no ghost, after all, Harry," said Dick with a laugh.

"I believe you're right."

"I'm sure of it, but now I wonder who the fellow could have been."

"It would be hard to say, Dick."

"And why do you suppose he has been playing ghost?"

"That would be hard to say; it may be, however, that he is some person without a home, who, having found this place, wished to remain here and has been playing ghost in order to keep people frightened away."

"I judge you are about right about that; well, we have turned the tables on his Ghostship nicely for we have frightened him away."

"So we have; I wonder if he'll come back?"

Dick laughed.

"I have my doubts," he replied, "judging by the haste he showed in getting away, I don't think he will come back in a hurry."

"Well, as we have earned the right, we will take possession here."

"So we will; jove! I wish we had a light."

"Well, we haven't one, so we'll have to make the best of it."

"That's right; we have a good deal to be thankful for anyway and need not let a little thing like having to stay in the dark worry us."

"No, indeed; we need not worry about it; his Ghostship stood it, and why should not we?"

"There is no reason, I guess we can stand it."

"Do you know anything about the arrangement of the rooms?"

"No, I was never upstairs."

"Come on, then; we'll find a room and camp down there till morning."

The youths made their way along what was evidently a hall.

They had taken only a few steps, however, when they came to a door.

Dick opened the door and entered the room, followed by Harry.

They moved cautiously about the room, feeling here and there with their hands.

"Jove! here's a stool," suddenly exclaimed Dick.

"And here's a pallet on the floor," said Harry.

"Well, well," remarked Dick; "I guess we're in his Ghostship's boudoir; it seems to be rather a high-handed proceeding to drive him forth into the world in such an

unceremonious fashion, but really, it serves him right; we have but given him a dose of his own medicine."

"You are right," agreed Harry; "and we will be able to bunk here in a fairly comfortable fashion."

The youths made themselves comfortable as possible under the circumstances.

The pallet was wide enough so that they could lie down side by side, and they did so.

They lay there perhaps half an hour talking of the situation.

"Say, I'm getting sleepy," said Harry, presently; "do you suppose there is any danger of that fellow coming back; what if he should do so and find us both asleep; he might murder us in cold blood."

"I don't think there is any danger," replied Dick; "anyway, I am a very light sleeper and he could not get into this room without waking me; then we would be able to make it warm for him."

"That's a fact; well, I believe I'll go to sleep, then."

"And I."

The youths disposed themselves in as comfortable a manner as possible and were just dozing off to sleep when they were aroused by the sound of footsteps and voices downstairs.

CHAPTER VII.

PLAYING GHOST.

"Somebody is down stairs, Dick!" whispered Harry.

"Yes, I hear them."

"Who do you suppose they are?"

"I cannot say, Harry."

"Perhaps it is the ghost, with some comrades, and they have come to turn the tables on us, and make us get out in a hurry."

"Such might be the case, but I doubt it, Harry."

"Do you think it possible that any of the redcoats got an inkling of the fact that we took refuge here, and have come to capture us?"

"I hardly think that, either; we are confident that we had given our pursuers the slip, you know."

"Yes; I didn't think they were around when we came in here."

"Let's step out into the hall and listen to what they are saying," suggested Dick; "we may be able to determine who they are and why they are here, then."

"All right; that's a good idea."

The two rose to their feet, and stole across the floor. They did not wish their footsteps to be heard down stairs. Dick opened the door and they stepped out into the hall. Here they paused and listened.

The sound of talking and laughter came to their ears quite plainly.

The newcomers, whoever they were, were still in the front room.

The youths listened intently, to hear what was said.

"So this house is haunted, eh?" they heard one voice say.

"Yes," from another; "that is what they say, anyway."

"Do you believe it?"

"Well, I can't say that I do; never took much interest in ghosts."

"Well," in another voice, "it is certainly gloomy enough here, for the house to be the abode of a ghost!"

"Yes, or several."

"Well," in still another voice, "I for one am not afraid if there is a ghost here—or a dozen for that matter!"

This fellow's voice trembled somewhat, and Dick discerned the fact.

"That fellow is frightened half out of his wits," he whispered to Harry; "did you notice how his voice trembled?—and then, he gave utterance to a boast, which is the sure sign that he is a coward."

"You are right, I noticed it, Dick; but who are they?"

"I'll tell you who I think they are."

"Who?"

"A party of young redcoats."

"You think so?"

"Yes; they have been out, having a time, and having heard that there was a haunted house here, they have decided to come and investigate."

"It wouldn't surprise me if you are right."

"I am sure that I am, Harry."

"Oh, say, fellows, I believe Jencks is frightened half to death!" said one of the others, in response to the remark of the one who said he was not afraid.

"That's right," from another; "did you note how his voice trembled?"

"Yes, I noticed it."

"So did I."

"And I."

"No such thing!" was the angry retort from the one called Jencks; "I am not afraid."

"Prove it, then, Jencks!" cried one.

"Yes, prove it!" from another.

"Prove it!"

"Prove it!"

Such were the cries, and the youths by listening carefully decided that there must be eight or ten of the fellows.

"Prove it!—how?" asked Jencks.

"Why, by taking the lead, of course. You go ahead, and lead the way upstairs. If there are any ghosts in this house there is where they will be."

"That's right, Jencks; that is just the thing for you to do, and then we will believe that you really are not afraid. I must acknowledge that I am somewhat afraid, myself."

"So am I!"

"It is the same with me!"

"I'm afraid! By jove! I don't care about being introduced to any ghosts!"

"They are trying to frighten the worthy Jencks," whispered Dick.

"I judge you are right," replied Harry; "I guess they will succeed, too."

But Jencks was determined that his comrades should not think he was frightened, and so he said, with as great an assumption of bravery as he could assume:

"All right; I'll take the lead, since the rest of you are afraid. There are no ghosts here, and I know it."

"Who told you, Jencks?"

"No one, but I know it, just the same. There are no such things as ghosts."

"You think there are not?"

"Of course; any sensible person ought to know that much."

"Then I am not sensible, for I don't know it."

"Nor I."

"It is the same with me; I believe there are such things!"

"I rather think Jencks will change his mind before he gets away from here!"

It was evident to the listeners above that the comrades of Jencks were trying to frighten the fellow.

They undoubtedly doubted the presence of a ghost in the house, and thought to have some sport, anyway, out of their companion.

"Bah! you are the most faint-hearted set of fellows I ever saw!" growled Jencks.

"But you can't see us, can you, Jencks?" with a laugh; "if you can see, you can do more than I can."

"That's right," from another; "But, say, go ahead, and lead the way, old fellow. We are anxious to see the ghost, if there is one here, and as you are not afraid, we want you in front."

"Yes, go ahead, Jencks. Take the lead; you may be commander of this expedition."

"All right; come along. I am not afraid, if you fellows are!"

"Oh, we know you aren't afraid; that's the reason we want you in the lead."

"Jove! I wish I had Jencks' nerve!"

"So do I!"

Jencks' comrades could not refrain from jollying him.

"Come on, you fellows!" cried Jencks; "I'll show you that there are no such things as ghosts!"

"Don't you think we can make him change his mind about that, Harry?" asked Dick in a cautious whisper.

"I think so, Dick."

Harry understood his companion's meaning.

"I think so; we'll try, anyway."

"What will we do, Dick?"

"I'll tell you: We'll wait till those fellows are halfway upstairs, and then we will utter a horrible groan in unison; do you understand?"

"Yes."

"All right; I'll keep my hand on your arm, and when I squeeze, you must groan your very best—or worse, at once."

"All right; say, that fellow they call Jencks will be in front, won't he!"

"I judge so, from all I have heard said."

"And he will be the worst frightened one of the lot. Say, Dick, I should not like to be on the stairs, behind him!"

"You think those who are behind him will be in danger, eh?"

"Yes; I think he will be in such a hurry to get back down that he won't give them time to get out of the way."

"It wouldn't surprise me if you are right, Harry!"

The party of men down stairs was making its way slowly across the floor of the front room now.

Jencks was in the lead, and presently he found the doorway.

"This way, fellows," he said; "here is another doorway. Come right along, and don't be afraid."

"We'll try not to be afraid," replied one in a tone of mock terror; "but you see, Jencks, we are not so brave as you!"

"That's right," from another; "I wish I were!"

"And so do I!"

They moved through the open doorway, into the other room, and presently Jencks found the stairway.

"Here are the stairs, fellows," he said; "come along, now. Follow me, and we will go upstairs."

"Say, supposing you go on alone, Jencks," suggested one of his companions; "you can take a look around for his Ghostship and then, if there is none there, we will come up."

"Say, that's a good plan!" said another, approvingly;

"go along, Jencks. We'll wait here at the foot of the stairs."

The others all gave utterance to remarks to the same effect.

But Jencks demurred.

"I won't do anything of the kind!" he declared; "I am not afraid, so far as that is concerned, but I don't think it the fair thing at all for me to go up alone, and leave you fellows below. You were as eager as I to come here and have a look at the ghost; now come along."

This was only fair and right, of course, but the others tried to make Jencks think otherwise.

"But you are not afraid, and we are, Jencks" protested one. "That makes all the difference in the world, you know."

"Yes," from another, "if I wasn't afraid, I should have no hesitancy in going right up."

"I think it is rather unhandsome of you, Jencks, not to do so, when you are not afraid!" from still another.

The rest made remarks to similar effect.

But Jencks would not have it so.

"I won't go up alone, and that is flat!" he declared; "you fellows wanted to come just as bad as I did, and if you are not willing to do your share, now that we are here, we will give the affair up and go back to camp."

The others demurred at this.

"No, no!" cried one; "we mustn't do that, until we see whether or not there is such a thing as a ghost here."

"Of course not," from another; "the fellows would give us the laugh, if we did that; we must go ahead."

"Yes, yes!" from still another; "go ahead, Jencks, and we will keep right at your heels."

"Yes, go along," urged the others.

"All right; I'll do so, but you fellows have got to come. If you hang back, I shall draw out for good."

"Oh, we'll stick right to you, Jencks!" declared one; "go ahead."

"Did you notice how the voice of the fellow they call Jencks trembled?" asked Dick, in a cautious whisper.

"Yes," replied Harry; "he is badly frightened, I should say."

"Half to death! It won't take much to stampede him, and when we give utterance to the groans, I think there will be some lively doings on the stairs."

"I should not be surprised."

"They're coming up, Harry; be ready!"

"I am all ready, now."

Slowly and carefully Jencks made his way up the stairs. His heart was in his mouth.

True, he had talked bravely to his comrades, but he was terribly frightened, just the same.

He would have given much to have been somewhere else just at that time.

He wished that he had not boasted that he wasn't afraid, and thus caused himself to be forced into taking the lead.

Had he been well toward the rear, he would not have felt so afraid.

But it was too late now.

He had made his boasts, had been forced to take the lead, and would have to make the best of it.

Jencks was trembling so bad that he could hardly make his way up the stairs, however; his legs trembled and were so weak they were not much more than capable of holding their owner's body up.

It was so dark that it was impossible to see one's hand before his face, and the darkness added to the terror of the situation.

Slowly up the stairs came the party of ghost-seekers.

Dick waited till he was about half way up, as near as he could judge by the sound.

Then he decided that it was time for action.

His hand was on Harry's arm.

Suddenly he squeezed his companion's arm.

This was the signal which had been agreed upon, and instantly the youths gave utterance to a couple of blood-curdling groans.

The effect was all that could have been desired.

Jencks' nerves were keyed up to the highest pitch, and the horrible sounding groans were all that was needed to upset him completely.

He gave utterance to a wild yell of terror, and threw himself backward with all his might, the result being that he overbalanced two or three of his comrades, who in turn upset the others, and the entire party went tumbling head over heels down the stairs!

Bumpetty-bump! bumpetty-bump! bumpetty-bump! the members of the party went, and all landed at the foot of the stairs in a badly mixed-up condition, Jencks, by some strange freak of fortune, although at the top when they started, being at the bottom of the pile when they alighted, and he very nearly got the life crushed out of his body.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE YOUTHS' PLAN SUCCEEDS.

Being desirous of making the situation as exciting as possible, the youths gave utterance to a series of the most blood-curdling groans.

The party of ghost-seekers was now in a completely demoralized condition.

The individual members were frightened as they had never before been frightened.

Jencks did not have a monopoly of this; all were alike in this respect.

The result was that there was a wild scramble to get up, and out of the house.

They had had all they wanted of this affair.

They had come to hunt ghosts, but having found them, they wished to get away.

The men struggled, and almost fought.

It was every man for himself, and the Old Fellow took the hindmost.

Gradually, one after another got free from the mix-up, and hastened to get away and out of the room and house.

As was meet and proper, perhaps, Jencks was the last one to get up and away.

He had been trampled scandalously.

His uniform—for the men were British soldiers, sure enough—was torn and ruined, and Jencks himself had suffered material damage.

He was covered with abrasions, and his right ear had been nearly torn off, while the left one had been stepped on and flattened out till it resembled a saddle-flap more than the ear of a human being.

The worthy Jencks was glad to escape with his life, however, and was not disposed to make a fuss about such minor injuries as these.

Just as he leaped to his feet Dick and Harry gave utterance to particularly horrible groans, and Jencks leaped forward in such haste that he bumped against the door-casing and was knocked flat.

He gave utterance to a howl of pain and fright and scrambled to his feet, however, and this time he was successful in getting through the doorway.

He reached the outer air without further mishap, and found the others awaiting him.

Dick and Harry were highly delighted.

Their plan had proved to be a complete success.

"Jove! Harry, we were more fortunate than his Ghostship who was here when we came," remarked Dick.

"You are right," was the reply; "we succeeded in putting the enemy to flight, while he did not."

"I would have given something to see those fellows tumbling down stairs," said Dick, with a chuckle.

"It would have been worth seeing," agreed Harry.

"I wonder what Jencks thinks about it now."

"I guess he'll hardly claim that he wasn't afraid! I think he is the one who gave utterance to that yell of fright."

"Undoubtedly, and I have no doubt he was the one who started the stampede."

"Quite likely; say, do you suppose they'll venture back again?"

"Hard telling, Harry; I am confident it is a party of reckless young redcoats and it would be just about like them to come back and have another trial."

"Well, I guess we can rout them a second time."

"Yes, and if we don't succeed, we can follow the example of the other ghost and beat a retreat."

"True, Harry, but we won't do it unless we have to."

Meanwhile, the redcoats were discussing the situation. Some were angry, others amused.

This was partly owing to temperament and depended to some extent also on the degree of damage sustained in the mix-up.

Those who had been stepped on and touzled about by the feet of their comrades, were in a bad humor, while those who had sustained no material damage, were in a position to appreciate the humor of the situation.

"It's all right for you fellows to laugh!" growled one of the redcoats who had had his uniform torn, and his feelings as well as his body hurt in the tumble down stairs; "but as for myself I can say that I don't see anything funny about it."

"I do," laughed another; "I must say that this is more fun than I have experienced before since coming to America."

"It is the same with me," said another; "jove! I'll wager that if that ghost has any appreciation of humor, he has laughed himself so hoarse that he won't be able to groan out loud again for a week."

"Say, what do you think about this ghost business, anyway?" queried another.

"What do we think?"

"Yes."

"In what way do you mean?"

"Why, I mean, do you really think it is a ghost?"

"Why, of course, it's a ghost!" declared Jencks in trembling tones; "no human could give utterance to such blood-curdling groans."

"Aha! Jencks, old boy, you weren't so brave as you thought you were!" laughed one of his comrades.

"He brave? Bah!" sneered another; "he was the worst scared fellow in the lot."

"I was not!" declared Jencks; "I was no worse frightened than any of the rest of you."

"That will do to tell. Why, you yelled worse than one of those wild American Indians."

"So he did," coincided another; "I thought the ghost had him, sure."

"He caused us all the trouble!" growled another; "if he hadn't thrown himself back upon top of us, we wouldn't have fallen down stairs."

"That's a fact," coincided another.

"Oh, growl if you want to!" grumbled Jencks; "I will venture to say, however, that if either of you fellows had been in front, as I was, you would have done the same as I did."

"I should hope not!" remarked one.

"Then you think you wouldn't have done so?" flared Jencks.

"That is what I think"

"Then prove it by going in there and bearding the ghost in his lair."

"All right, that is just what we will do, eh, fellows?"

"Yes, yes; I'll go."

"And I."

"Count me in."

Six or seven of the redcoats thus signified their willingness to re-enter the house and risk an encounter with the ghost.

"I don't believe it's a ghost, anyway," said one.

"Nor I," from another; "in my opinion, it is someone playing ghost to frighten away such faint-hearted fellows as Jencks here."

"That's all right," grumbled Jencks; "by the time you get chased out of there a second time, I guess it will be proven that I am not the only faint-hearted one."

"Don't you fear for us," was the reply; "we won't get chased out this time; indeed, we will come forth with colors flying, dragging the ghost or ghosts by the heels."

"I don't doubt that you will come out with colors flying," retorted Jencks, sarcastically; "your red coat-tails will be sticking straight out behind."

"Come, come, Jencks!" laughed one, good-naturedly; "your late experience has soured you."

"You'll see."

"I wish we could see," with a laugh; "I can't say that I like this Egyptian darkness, myself."

"There's one good thing about it," said another; "it will enable us to see the ghost, if there is any to be seen, for ghosts are always white, you know, and will show up better on a black background."

At this instant a hollow groan resounded through the old house and was heard by the redcoats.

"Ooh-oo-oo-oo-oo!" gasped Jencks, and he hastened to get around so that the other members of the party were between him and the house.

"What's the matter, Jencks?" asked one.

"That is only the wind, sothing through the treetops," said another.

"You-u'll f-find out!" said Jencks, his teeth chattering.

"Bah! shut up!" growled one of the redcoats; "come on, boys, let's go in and haul that ghost out by the heels."

"All right, go ahead, we'll be right with you."

The little party moved forward and entered the house.

"You take the lead, Hankin," said one; "we'll back you up; but say, whatever you do, don't tumble backward down stairs and upset the rest of us."

"No fear of that."

The youths were listening and heard the redcoats as soon as they re-entered the house.

"They are coming," said Harry in a whisper.

"Yes," was the reply; "they didn't get enough the other time. Well, we'll see if we can't satisfy them this time."

They listened intently and heard the redcoats enter the second room and start to ascend the stairs.

"Wait till they are about halfway up," whispered Dick, and then when I squeeze your arm, groan the worst you know how."

"All right."

The redcoats were soon halfway up the stairs.

"I guess his Ghostship has left the house and taken to the timber," remarked the redcoat who was in the lead.

Scarcely had he spoken when upon the air arose a couple of groans which were blood-curdling in the extreme.

In spite of their attempts to keep from becoming frightened, the redcoats could not prevent a feeling of terror from coming over them.

Their hair seemed to rise straight up on end.

They paused and stood still, their hearts in their throats.

"Foolish humans, beware!" said Dick in a hollow, sepulchral tone of voice; "go at once and live, remain and die!"

Then the youths gave utterance to a most horrible groan in unison.

This was too much for the redcoats' nerve.

They made up their minds that they preferred to live, and the way they went back down those stairs was a caution.

They knew their way fairly well by this time and were soon outside.

Their comrades were highly excited and asked eager questions.

"Is it a ghost, sure enough?"

"Did you hear it again?"

"What did it say?"

"Did you see it?"

"I t-told y-you s-so!" this, of course, from Jencks.

"Did we see it?" cried one of the redcoats; "well, I should say we did! eh, fellows?"

The others understood at once their comrade's purpose; he wished to make those who had remained outside think that they had had ample cause for taking flight, so they hastened to acquiesce in the statement that they had seen the ghost.

"What did it look like?" was the reply; "it was a great, white figure with a halo of red and flames seemed to be going up from it; isn't that right, boys?"

"Yes, yes;" cried one; "and I smelt brimstone."

"So did I," from another.

"I tell you what it is," remarked still another; "I think we had better be getting away from here; that blooming ghost may take it into his head to come out here and go for us."

"Yes, yes; let's go!" cried Jencks, and he started at once.

The others thought favorably of the proposition and followed suit.

They were soon back at their quarters and turning in went to sleep.

It was a wonderful story they had to tell their comrades next day, and great the amazement of all who listened to them.

Many were incredulous, but to all such the heroes of the ghost-hunting episode said:

"Go and see for yourself, if you don't believe us."

Dick and Harry heard the redcoats take their leave, with a feeling of relief.

"They are going, Dick," Harry remarked.

"Yes, I believe you are right."

"Do you think they will come back?"

"I hardly think so; in my opinion, they have had all of this they want for one night; I think we will be safe in lying down and going to sleep."

They waited a few minutes, and then being certain that the redcoats had gone for good, they again lay down upon the pallet and were soon asleep.

They were up bright and early next morning

"Now, then," said Dick, "I wish to secure information regarding the plans of General Cornwallis; the question is, how am I going to go about it?"

"I have a plan," said Harry, eagerly.

CHAPTER IX.

THE REDCOATS FIRE THE HOUSE.

"You have a plan?" queried Dick in surprise.

"Yes."

"Let me hear what your plan is."

"Well, to begin with, Dick, you don't dare show your face in the town, do you?"

"No, Harry; I would be recognized and made a prisoner of at once if I were to appear in town in the daytime."

"Exactly! Well, such being the case, it will be a very difficult matter for you yourself to do anything."

"True, Harry, but I must do it just the same."

"It isn't necessary, Dick."

The youth looked surprised.

"It isn't?"

"No."

"Why isn't it?"

"For the reason that you can send a substitute."

Dick started.

"You mean that——"

"I will go in your stead, Dick," eagerly. "I am a citizen of the town, you know, and can go where I please without being suspected."

Dick looked thoughtful.

"I don't know but that is a good idea, Harry," he said; "and if you are willing to attempt the work, I believe that I will let you do so."

"Good! I shall be glad to make the attempt and will do my best to be successful."

"All right, Harry, but you must be very careful; should it be discovered that you are playing the part of a spy, you will be in danger of losing your life."

"I know that; I'll be careful."

"By the way, what am I going to do for food?" asked Dick; "I'm as hungry as a bear, even now."

"That is easy enough; I'll go home and get my breakfast and then I'll bring you some food."

"That will be fine if you can do it without being caught at it."

"Oh, I'll look out for that."

After a few more words Harry took his departure.

He managed to slip out of the timber and into the town without attracting attention, and he lost no time in making his way to his home.

His parents and sister greeted him joyously.

"Where is Dick, Harry?" asked Nellie, eagerly.

Harry laughed and chuckled his sister under the chin.

"Oh, he's in a safe place where you can't get him, sis," the youth said with a chuckle.

"I've a good mind to slap your face, Harry Murray," said the girl, blushing; "now answer my question."

"Yes, where is he, Harry?" asked Mr. Murray.

The youth glanced around him in a questioning manner.

"Are you sure there is no one within hearing distance?" he asked.

"Quite sure," was the reply; "a couple of redcoats remained on guard over our house all night, but they went away an hour ago."

"Good! then I'll tell you where Dick Slater is; he is in the old haunted house."

Exclamations escaped the three hearers.

"Ugh! what a place to have to stay!" shuddered Nellie.

"Did you stay there last night?" asked Mr. Murray.

"Yes," and then Harry told the story of his and Dick's adventures during the preceding night.

His parents and sister listened with eager interest.

"And you are going to play the part of a spy?" remarked Mrs. Murray, anxiously, when the youth had finished his story.

"Yes, mother; but I am going to eat my breakfast and take some food to Dick before I attempt anything in that line. I am hungry as a bear!"

"You shall have all you can eat, my son!"

Harry ate heartily, and when he had finished, his mother and sister fixed up a lunch for the youth to carry to Dick.

He hastened away, at once, and succeeded in getting back to the haunted house without attracting attention, he was sure.

Dick was hungry, and ate heartily, and then gave Harry instructions in regard to what it was that he wished him to learn.

"Oh, I'll do the work, all right, Dick!" the youth declared, confidently.

Then he took his departure.

He was gone till past noon, and then he put in an appearance, bringing some information of interest, and some more food.

"Your mother seems to be determined that I shall not starve, Harry!" remarked Dick, as he surveyed the liberal amount of food which Harry had brought.

"It is sis's work," grinned Harry; "she'd kill me if she knew I told you, but she has taken a great liking to you, Dick!"

"I feel greatly flattered, Harry," said Dick blushing through the coat of tan; "your sister is a fine girl, and one whose liking any fellow might be proud to gain!"

"Oh, sis is a good girl, and there is no mistake about it," Harry agreed; "how could she help being?" he added with a grin; "isn't she my sister?"

Dick laughed.

"You are all right, Harry!" he said earnestly.

Harry took his departure, presently, and was gone the rest of the afternoon.

It was just coming on to be dark when he returned to the haunted house.

He brought more food and some interesting information.

As Dick ate, Harry told what he had learned.

He had been so fortunate as to overhear a conversation between a couple of British officers, and had learned that it was the intention of the British to move northward and make an attempt to capture Lafayette and his army.

"That is indeed important information!" exclaimed Dick, when Harry had finished; "Harry, you have done splendidly!"

Harry blushed with pleasure.

"I am glad you are pleased," he said simply.

"I am more than pleased; I am delighted. And, now, if I had my horse, I would get out of Petersburg as quickly as possible."

"I believe I can get your horse for you, Dick!" said Harry.

"You think so?" in surprise.

"Yes; I saw your horse to-day; he is in an old corral, not far from here. There are a lot of horses in there, you know, and they are guarded by a sentinel, but I am sure I can get the horse without much trouble."

"I don't want you to take any chances on my account, Harry," said Dick dubiously.

"Oh, I won't be running any risk to speak of. I'll get your horse, never you fear!"

"All right; get him, if you can, and I will be your debtor to such an extent that I shall never be able to get out."

"That is all right; I am glad to be of service to you, and through you to the great cause!" the youth declared.

"You had better wait an hour or two before making the attempt," said Dick.

"I judge that will be best," agreed Harry.

The youths talked for a couple of hours and then Harry said:

"I guess I will be going; I think I have waited long enough."

"Very well, go ahead," said Dick; "but be very careful, don't take any chances; if you should get badly hurt or killed, I should never be able to forgive myself, nor would your parents and sister ever forgive me."

"Oh, that's all right," said Harry; "I'm not going to get hurt."

Then, after a few more words, he took his departure.

Harry had been gone perhaps half an hour when Dick gave a start and uttered a low exclamation.

"Jove! I thought I heard voices," he murmured; "I'll see about the matter; I don't want any callers just now."

Dick was seated on the pallet in the room in which he and Harry had spent the previous night, and rising, he made his way out into the hall and to the head of the stairs.

Here he paused and listened.

His ears had not deceived him.

He heard voices quite plainly now.

"The fellows, whoever they are, are down in front of the house," said Dick to himself; "there must be quite a number of them."

Then a thought struck him.

"Jove! I wonder if it isn't another gang of redcoats come to investigate this matter of the house being haunted," he said to himself; "yes, I'll wager that is it; no doubt those fellows who were here last night told a thrilling story and so excited the curiosity of their comrades that some of them have come to investigate and see whether or not the others told the truth."

Again Dick listened eagerly, and then as he heard footsteps in the front room down stairs he murmured:

"They're coming; I wish they had stayed away until after Harry had got back, but as they didn't do so, and are here, I shall have to do my best to make them wish they had stayed away altogether."

Dick listened and waited.

The party of redcoats—for such they were, as Dick learned from their conversation—entered the second room and started upstairs.

The location of the stairway had undoubtedly been described to them, for they seemed to have no difficulty in finding it.

It was very dark and Dick could not see the redcoats at all, but he could hear them and understood all that they said.

They were making light of the story their comrades had told them and were evidently of the opinion that it was made of whole cloth.

"Bah!" exclaimed one; "those fellows lied like the troopers that they are; I'll wager that they neither heard nor saw anything out of the way here last night. Ghost! bah! the nearest we will come to finding a ghost here, will be a bat."

At this instant Dick gave utterance to a terrible groan.

He had had considerable practice the night before and was able to do the work in good shape.

"Jupiter Pluvius! what was that?" gasped the fellow who had just been speaking.

Again Dick groaned, this time in an even more terrible manner.

Then in a hollow, sepulchral voice, he said:

"Foolish humans, beware! leave at once or your blood be upon your own heads!"

Dick supplemented this with a horrible groan and shuffled his feet on the floor, making a peculiar noise which, taken in connection with the rest, was anything but pleasing to hear.

Doubtless the redcoats thought the ghost was coming right after them.

Be that as it may, they turned and fled.

They stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once—and in a hurry, too.

They went down the stairs, four steps at a jump, and they got out of the house just as quickly as they possibly could.

One fellow stubbed his toe and fell through the doorway into the outer air, turning a complete somersault.

He was a hot-headed fellow and this, added to the rest, angered him terribly.

He was wild with rage.

"Blast the luck!" he cried; "I'll put a stop to this ghost business; I'm going to burn the blooming house down!"

The redcoat had steel, flint and tinder, and he soon had a blaze started.

None of his comrades objected; indeed, all seemed in favor of setting fire to the house and lent all the assistance in their power.

They brought broken twigs and underbrush and piled it against the side of the house and soon a fire was crackling merrily.

"There!" said the redcoat with an air of satisfaction; "we'll give his Ghostship a good roasting and see how he likes it."

"The chances are that he won't mind it," remarked the other; "he is probably used to it by this time."

Dick, stationed at the top of the stairs, listened intently for some minutes after the redcoats had flown.

"I wonder what they'll do next?" he asked himself.

A few minutes passed and then Dick sniffed the air.

"I smell smoke!" he exclaimed to himself; "jove! I wonder if those fools have set the house on fire."

He waited and listened eagerly for a few minutes longer.

The smell of smoke grew stronger.

Presently he heard the crackling of the flames.

Then a dull, red glow could be seen in the room below, a measure dispelling the darkness.

There was no longer any doubt in Dick's mind regarding the matter.

The redcoats had set the house on fire!

"Jove! I'll have to be getting out of here," thought Dick;

"it is no part of my plan to wind up my career by being burned to death like a rat in a trap."

Dick lost no time.

He proceeded to leave the house at once.

He had put in his time during the past day in getting acquainted with the house and its surroundings and he knew just how to make his escape.

He made his way to the end of the hall and raising the window which was there he quickly and silently climbed through the opening.

There was a shed roof at the rear of the house and Dick let himself down upon it.

Then he made his way carefully down the roof to the lower edge and leaped to the ground.

The distance was not to exceed eight feet and there was no danger that he would be injured.

Dick made his way to the timber, which was only a few yards distant, and to his surprise and joy found Harry and the horse there.

"I saw the redcoats setting fire to the house, Dick," exclaimed Harry; "and knowing that you would come out the back way, I made a circuit in order to avoid being seen, and here I am."

"Harry, you're a jewel," said Dick, earnestly.

CHAPTER X.

DICK SECURES VALUABLE INFORMATION.

All Dick had to do now was to mount and ride away, but he lingered long enough to thank Harry for what he had done.

"You are a brave fellow, Harry," he said, "and I hope that we will meet again."

"I hope so!" was the reply.

Then Dick told Harry to give his regards to his parents and sister, and shaking the youth's hand, he mounted and rode away.

He crossed the creek, and headed northward toward Richmond.

He arrived there at about three o'clock in the morning, without having experienced any further adventures.

Immediately after breakfast, next morning, Dick went to headquarters and reported to General Lafayette.

The young French commander was glad to see Dick, and he listened to the youth's report with interest.

"So Cornwallis is going to try to capture me, is he?" he remarked, when Dick had finished.

"That is what he intends to do, if possible," replied Dick.

"Well, I think he will have to catch us before he can capture us," with a smile.

"That is true," agreed Dick.

General Lafayette, being forewarned, had plenty of time in which to get ready for the masterly retreat which, as history shows, he inaugurated.

Cornwallis appeared in front of Richmond, to find that his expected prey had escaped him.

Lafayette and his army was away, moving toward the north.

Cornwallis entered Richmond in triumph, and then pushed on in pursuit of the patriots.

No matter how he tried, however, he could not catch up with Lafayette.

The patriot army kept out of his way.

This was largely due to the splendid scouting and spy work done by Dick and his comrade, Bob Estabrook.

They kept a constant watch of the redcoats, and Lafayette was always cognizant of the whereabouts of the enemy, and when the redcoats got too close, he would move his army to a safe distance.

It did not matter to him whether it was night or day; he would move his army just the same.

Cornwallis lay down on more than one evening, confident that next morning he would catch "the boy," as he called Lafayette, only to wake up in the morning to find that the patriots were out of his reach.

The redcoats followed the patriots northward till they came to the Rapidan River. Here they stopped, and Dick, who was spying upon them, made up his mind that they were going to give up the pursuit.

"I wonder what they will do next?" he asked himself.

He decided to find out if possible.

"I'll go into their camp, to-night, and find out their plans, if such a thing is possible!" he said to himself, grimly.

He returned to the patriot encampment, and reported to Lafayette.

The young Frenchman was willing that Dick should make the attempt, but told him to be very careful.

Like Washington he was finding Dick to be invaluable, and he did not wish to run the risk of losing him.

Dick promised to be careful, and soon after dark he took his departure.

It was only about two miles to the British encampment, and it did not take Dick long to reach the vicinity.

"I must enter that encampment, and hear what is being talked of," thought the youth, as he stood looking down

upon it from the top of a knoll; "but how is it to be accomplished?"

It would be a very difficult undertaking.

Dick had done this sort of thing before, however.

And he was confident he could do it again.

The British encampment was in the open country, just outside of the edge of the timber which bordered the Rapidan.

Dick moved forward, and approached to the edge of the timber.

It was yet early in the evening, and none of the redcoats had lain down for the night.

He stood here and gazed out upon the scene.

Campfires were burning here and there, and groups of soldiers were sitting in the light thrown out by the campfires.

Others of the soldiers were sauntering about.

"They do not intend to follow us any further," thought Dick; "I am sure of it. They are taking things too easy. Now, I wonder what will be their next move? I must find out!"

Dick fell to sizing up the situation.

He looked the ground over with critical eyes.

He intended trying to slip into the encampment, and to that end he had donned a redcoat uniform which he always carried with him.

If he could succeed in getting into the encampment he would be fairly secure, as no one would be likely to recognize him after night, by the uncertain light of the campfires.

As Dick stood there, looking out upon the encampment he suddenly noticed a couple of men walking toward the edge of the timber.

The men would reach the timber almost exactly at the point where Dick stood.

As he drew nearer, Dick saw that the men were officers.

And when they got still nearer the youth was surprised to see that one was General Cornwallis himself.

"Hello! here is luck!" the youth thought; "here comes Cornwallis and one of his officers! I may be able to learn what I wish to know without having to enter the encampment."

Dick secreted himself behind a large tree, and awaited the approach of the officers.

They, never for a moment suspecting the presence in the vicinity of a spy, came straight onward, and paused at the edge of the timber.

They were not ten feet distant from Dick.

He was close enough so that he could hear every word spoken, without the least difficulty.

The men were silent for a few moments after coming to a stop.

They stared out upon the encampment, and seemed to be thinking.

Presently Cornwallis spoke.

"Well, Tarlton," he said, slowly and deliberately, "I judge we will have to give up the chase after that Frenchman, after all."

It seems as though it will be an impossibility to catch him," was the reply.

"Yes; he is kept informed of our movements by his scouts and spies, and being better informed regarding the lay of the country, has no difficulty in keeping out of our way."

"True."

"And such being the case, I think I shall give up the chase and return to Richmond."

"I judge that would be as good a plan as any."

"Yes; but I have a scheme in mind, Tarlton, which I think a good one, and I shall depend upon you to put it into execution."

"I am entirely at your service, General Cornwallis; I am ready to attempt any work which you may set me to do."

"This will not be anything so very difficult."

"That does not matter. What is it you wish me to do?"

"I will tell you. I understand that the State Legislature of the State of Virginia is in session at Charlottesville, which is perhaps thirty miles from here, to the west and south; now, if you can get there, break up the Legislature and capture the Governor, Thomas Jefferson, you will be doing a good stroke. Do you think you can do it?"

"I think so. I am more than willing to try, at any rate."

"Good! I thought you would be, and I am confident that you will succeed, too."

"I will succeed, if it is possible to do so."

"I am sure of it."

"When shall I start?"

"As soon as you like."

"Good! I'll get my men ready, and start this very night."

"Very well; and, Tarlton, there is another thing you might do while you are over in that part of the country."

"What, General Cornwallis?"

"I understand that the rebels have considerable military stores at Albemarle, which is about twenty miles south of Charlottesville; if you could go down there and seize these stores, you would be doing a good piece of work."

"True; well, I will do both, if such a thing is possible, and I see no reason why it should not be."

"Nor do I. I am confident you will succeed."

I do not think your confidence is misplaced."

"How soon will you get started?"

"Oh, it won't take more than a couple of hours to get the men ready."

"Then you ought to be able to reach Charlottesville by morning."

"Yes, we will start there by daylight."

"You will probably find Thomas Jefferson at his home at Monticello."

"Yes, quite likely."

"Make sure of him, the first thing, Tarleton."

"I shall do so."

"Do; it will be quite a big thing for us if we succeed in capturing the Governor of the State."

"So it will; I shall ride to his home, and surround it, the very first thing, and then I can attend to the rest of it later."

"That will be the proper way to do it."

They talked a few moments longer, and then walked back to the camp, leaving Dick considerably excited.

"So that is your scheme, is it, General Cornwallis?" the youth murmured, grimly; "you are going to capture Thomas Jefferson, the Governor of Virginia, are you? And then you are going to go on down and capture the stores at Albemarle. Well, we will see! You won't do it, if I can help myself; and I am going to try hard to help myself!"

Dick hastened away from the spot, and headed back toward the patriot encampment.

"Joye! but I was lucky!" he mused as he hastened along; "I secured the very information which I wished to secure, and had no trouble about it at all. The commander of the British forces and his right hand man were kind enough to walk right out to where I was hidden, and talk their plans over in my hearing. They would kick themselves if they knew that!"

Dick did not allow the grass to grow under his feet.

He was not long in getting back to the encampment.

He made his way straight to headquarters.

General Lafayette was still up, and he greeted Dick pleasantly.

Dick lost no time in making his report.

"So that is what they propose doing?" he remarked; "well, what do you suggest, Dick?"

"That I mount and ride to Charlottesville at top speed and warn Thomas Jefferson of his danger."

Lafayette nodded.

"I judge that will be the best thing to do," he agreed.

"Do you wish anyone to accompany you?"

Dick shook his head.

"No," he replied; "I will go alone. One can make better time than two or more."

"I judge you are right; and you will start——"

"At once!"

"Very well, and success to you, my boy. I hope you will reach there in time to defeat the object of the British."

"I think I shall have no difficulty in doing that, General Lafayette, and I have a good horse, and then, being only one, I can travel at a faster gait than can a hundred or more."

"True."

Dick hastened out of Lafayette's tent, and ten minutes later he rode out of the encampment, and away in the direction of Charlottesville.

He was going to save the Governor of Virginia from capture.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK SAVES THOMAS JEFFERSON FROM CAPTURE.

Dick had never been through the portion of the country which he was now called upon to traverse, but he knew the general direction, and with a youth like him, who had become expert in such work, this was all that was necessary.

He was confident that he would succeed in finding Charlottesville.

Onward through the night he rode.

At about three o'clock in the morning, feeling sure that he must be not a great distance from his destination, Dick dismounted at a farm house, and rousing up the owner, asked how far it was to Charlottesville.

The man told him it was only a mile further, and directed him how to go. Thanking the man, Dick rode onward.

He was soon in the town, and he lost no time in warning the people that Tarleton and his band of butchers was coming.

A man volunteered to accompany Dick, and the two went to Monticello, and roused the household of Thomas Jefferson.

The Governor came out and talked with Dick.

When he learned that Tarleton was moving to capture him he at once gave the order for a horse to be brought.

"How soon do you think will Tarleton and his men get here?" he asked, and Dick replied that it was hard to say.

"They may not reach here before daylight," he went on; "then again they might get here very soon."

"Well, I think it will be wise for me to get away at the earliest possible moment, don't you?" he remarked, and Dick acquiesced in this.

"Yes," he agreed; "it will not do to take any chances. At this instant a man rode up at a gallop.

He was from Charlottesville.

"Tarleton and his men are there!" he cried; "and they will be here very soon!"

"I will go at once!" cried Jefferson.

Then he seized Dick's hand and wrung it.

"I thank you most heartily and sincerely, Master Sl^{ter}!" he said; "you have saved me from capture, with no doubt. I shall not forget your brave act in coming a distance to warn me."

"Don't mention it, sir," said Dick quietly; "I have no reward in being instrumental in defeating the object of the redcoats."

The Governor mounted his horse and rode away, accompanied by one of the servants.

"I guess he will succeed in escaping," thought Dick, "now to make my escape."

"We had better take a roundabout road in going back to Charlottesville," said the man who had accompanied Dick, and the youth acquiesced in this.

"It will be best to do so," he agreed; "we must avoid the redcoats if possible."

"I know a way to go, and we will be able to get past them," the man said; "it is a sort of path through the timber."

They set out at once and succeeded in getting back to Charlottesville without encountering the redcoats who had gone to Monticello for the purpose of trying to capture Thomas Jefferson.

They soon learned that not all of the force had gone to Monticello, however, but only a part of it.

They were challenged just as they were riding into Charlottesville.

They did not stop to answer the challenge, but turning their horses rode away as rapidly as possible.

The sentinel fired a shot after them.

This aroused his comrades, who mounted in hot haste and gave chase to Dick and his comrade.

It was now coming daylight and the redcoats were enabled to see the fugitives.

Had it been dark, Dick and his companion could easily have escaped, but as it was, the chase was kept up several miles.

Dick and his companion were well mounted, however, and they gradually drew away from their pursuers without realizing that they would be unable to overtake the fugitives, gave up the chase.

As soon as the redcoats turned back, Dick and his companion brought their horses down to a walk, and after the

gone another mile, the man shook hands with Dick bidding him good-bye, turned and started toward Charlottesville, which place was his home.

Dick continued onward.

He rode at a good pace and reached the patriot encampment on the banks of the Rapidan about eleven o'clock.

He made his way to Lafayette's tent at once.

"Ah! back so soon?" exclaimed Lafayette; "did you succeed in reaching Charlottesville ahead of the redcoats?"

"Yes," replied Dick; "I got there in time."

"And Thomas Jefferson escaped?"

"He did; and so did all the members of the Legislature."

"That is good; I am glad you got there in time."

"So am I; I doubt not that Tarleton was very much disappointed when he found his expected prey had escaped him."

No doubt of it; and now I suppose his next move will be to try to capture the stores at Albemarle."

"Undoubtedly that is what he will try to do."

"Well, we must block his game if possible."

"Yes, indeed, and I don't see why it will not be possible to do so."

Nor I; I think we will be able to get across and station ourselves between Charlottesville and Albemarle."

And I; I think it can be done if you move promptly."

We will break camp at once."

Lafayette issued the orders immediately and in one hour's time his army was ready to march.

Just as they were ready to start, one thousand Pennsylvania regulars under command of General Wayne appeared, and thus reinforced, Lafayette felt almost strong enough to give Cornwallis' army a battle.

The first thing to do, however, was to head off Tarleton and keep him from capturing the military stores at Albemarle.

So after a wait of half an hour to permit Wayne's men to rest and eat a bite, the start was made.

During all the rest of the day the army marched on the double quick.

A pause of an hour was made just before nightfall to enable the men to rest and eat their supper and then the march was resumed.

The march was kept up until about four o'clock in the morning.

The men were allowed to rest three hours, the majority of them falling asleep instantly and sleeping the sleep of exhaustion.

They were aroused at seven, ate a bite and the march was resumed.

Three hours later the army occupied a position on the north side of Albemarle and less than a mile distant from the place.

Tarleton had not yet put in an appearance.

They had been too quick for him.

Tarleton and his men put in an appearance at about four o'clock in the afternoon.

His scouts discovered the presence of the patriot army in time to prevent Tarleton from running into an ambush, however, and he brought his force to a stop at a safe distance.

He was greatly disappointed.

He had hoped to capture the military stores.

Had he been able to do so, it would, in a measure, have compensated him for his failure to capture Thomas Jefferson.

Tarleton was a headstrong fellow and a stubborn fighter and he hated to give up.

As he had only about two hundred men with him, however, he could not hope to contend with the patriot army.

There was only one thing that he could do, and that was to rejoin Cornwallis at Richmond at the earliest possible moment.

Having so decided, Tarleton gave the order and his force rode away.

Dick, who had gone forward on a scouting expedition, and who saw the action of the redcoats, hastened back and carried the news to General Lafayette.

"I thought they would give it up," remarked Lafayette; "now the thing for us to do is to follow them up; Tarleton will rejoin Cornwallis, and if I get a good chance I will offer the British battle. I have four thousand men as against Cornwallis' five thousand, and with a slight advantage of position to equalize matters, should be able to give him a good fight."

General Wayne acquiesced in this view of the case, as did Dick, also, and it was decided to follow on the track of Tarleton and his men.

They set out at once.

Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook rode ahead and kept close upon the heels of Tarleton's band.

The redcoats, being mounted, reached the James River at Point of Forks a little while before sunset.

Here Cornwallis with his entire force was encamped.

Having made this discovery, Dick and Bob hastened back till they came to the encampment of the patriot force.

Lafayette was surprised when he learned that Cornwallis was in the vicinity.

"It is all right, however," he said; "let the British

advance upon Albemarle, if they like. We will select our ground and give them battle."

"So we will," agreed General Wayne; "we will give them a fight and a good one, too."

But when morning came, Cornwallis did not advance upon Albemarle.

He had learned that Lafayette's force had been strengthened materially, and he decided that it would be wiser not to venture any farther inland.

He made up his mind to relinquish all designs on the stores at Albemarle and so, instead of marching in that direction, his army moved down the river toward Richmond.

Dick sent Bob back to Lafayette with the news, and continued to follow the British at a safe distance.

The British army continued its march two days, and the patriot army followed on the afternoon of the second day.

On the afternoon of the second day, a messenger from General Washington put in an appearance.

He had messages for Generals Lafayette and Wayne, and also one for Dick.

Dick opened his and read it.

"What is it, Dick?" asked Bob, whose curiosity had been aroused. "What does the commander-in-chief want?"

"This is an order for us to report to him at Philadelphia, Bob."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes."

"When are we to report there?"

"At the earliest possible moment."

"Jove! then we'll have to start for Philadelphia right away, eh?"

"Yes, right away, Bob; I will go and tell General Lafayette and then we will start at once."

It was unnecessary to tell Lafayette, however.

General Washington had mentioned in his message to Lafayette the fact that he had ordered the "Liberty Boys" to report to him in Philadelphia.

"I am sorry to have you go, Dick," the young Frenchman said; "I shall miss you, but, of course, the commander-in-chief's wishes is the law. Orders are orders, and you must go."

"Thank you," said Dick; "we would be glad to remain and would like nothing better than to be here and help you thrash Cornwallis out of his boots, but, as you say, orders are orders, and we will have to go."

Half an hour later Dick Slater and his band of "Liberty Boys" parted from the patriot force and rode away toward the north, followed by the cheers of their late comrades.

CHAPTER XII.

DOING BUSINESS BY THE WHOLESALE.

The "Liberty Boys" had a long ride before them. From the point where they started from the patriot army to Philadelphia was nearly three hundred and fifty miles. They figured that it would take them just about a week to make the trip.

They rode steadily onward for five days and a half. They crossed the Susquehanna River about four o'clock in the afternoon of the sixth day.

They continued on till six o'clock.

They paused on the summit of a ridge, and away down below them, curling up through the treetops, they saw three or four columns of smoke.

"What does that mean, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I don't know, Bob; it looks as though there was an encampment of some kind down there."

"You're right; I wonder which it is, friends or foes?"

"It is hard to tell; I guess we will have to make investigation."

"That is the only safe plan."

Dick turned to the "Liberty Boys."

"Dismount, boys, and wait here," he ordered; "Bob and I will go on a scouting expedition and see whether the people who started those camp-fires are friends or whether they are foes."

The youths dismounted at once.

Dick and Bob tied their horses and set out through the timber, afoot.

The point where the columns of smoke showed, was off to one side, away from the road.

The youths made their way along at a moderate pace, and twenty minutes later they came to a stop at the edge of a little valley about half a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide.

The scene which met the youths' gaze filled them with amazement.

Right opposite where they were standing, and about the centre of the open space, were at least three hundred redcoats and Tories.

They had evidently camped for the night, and were engaged in cooking their suppers over the various camp-fires.

"Well, well, what does this mean, Dick?" asked Bob. "I didn't know there were any redcoats in this part of the country, did you?"

"No, I wasn't expecting to find any here, Bob."

"Neither was I; Jove! there must be three or four hundred of them, isn't there?"

"About three hundred, I should judge."

There was an eager look on Bob's face as he gazed out on the redcoats and Tories.

"How far is it from here to Philadelphia, Dick?" he asked.

"About fifty miles, I judge. Why?"

"Say, Dick, wouldn't it be great if we could capture those fellows and march them into Philadelphia?"

Bob's voice fairly trembled with eagerness.

"Yes, it would be great, sure enough, Bob!" with a smile. "It would be doing business by wholesale, would it not, if we hundred fellows should succeed in capturing three hundred?"

"Indeed it would; it would be a big day for us, Dick."

"You are right about that, but do you think it possible for us to capture them?"

"I think so, Dick; you see they are entirely unsuspecting, and we will be able to take them by surprise. Look where they have their arms stacked."

"I see; we might be able to get in between the redcoats and their arms by taking them by surprise, and in that case we would have them at our mercy even though they are three to one."

"You are right, Dick; I am sure we can capture them, without being forced to shed a drop of blood. Let's do it, anyway, what do you say?"

"I am willing to make the attempt."

"All right, that settles it, then; come, let's hurry back and tell the boys."

"Very well, come along."

Having decided upon their course of action, the youths did not delay longer.

Turning, they stole away from the spot as silently as possible.

Fifteen minutes later they reached the spot where they left the "Liberty Boys."

Dick told the youths what he and Bob had discovered, and asked what they thought about the matter of trying to capture the redcoats.

They were unanimously in favor of making the attempt. "I see no reason why we should not succeed in capturing them," said Mark Morrison, "if we can take them by surprise and get between them and their weapons, we will be all right and should be able to capture them without difficulty; they will be helpless and will have to surrender die!"

"You're right, Mark," said Bob; "by waiting till it is dark, we will be able to slip up close to the redcoats with-

out being detected, then a sudden dash, and we will have them at our mercy."

"I think we will be able to make the capture," said Dick; "we will conceal our horses in the timber here, eat our supper and then get to work."

The youths led their horses into the timber and tied them to trees.

Then they ate their supper, which was composed of cold bread and meat.

It was not yet as dark as it would be later, so Dick decided to wait an hour.

This was done.

When the hour had passed, the youths, with Dick and Bob in the lead, made their way in the direction of the redcoats' encampment.

They moved slowly as there was no particular need of haste.

Half an hour later they reached the little valley in which was the encampment of the redcoats.

It was now quite dark, but the camp-fires blazing up brightly made the redcoats and Tories plainly visible.

It was evident that nothing was farther from the redcoats' thoughts than that they should be in danger.

They were lying carelessly about on blankets thrown on the ground, and were laughing and talking and having a good time.

So secure did they feel that they had not even taken the trouble to station sentinels about the camp.

This circumstance would have the effect of making the "Liberty Boys'" task much easier than it otherwise would have been.

"It would make it easy for them to take the redcoats by surprise.

Dick had given the "Liberty Boys" instruction, and after pausing a few moments to get the lay of the land, so to speak, the party moved forward.

The youths crept across the open space with the stealthiness of Indians.

They pursued this course until they reached the point where the light from the camp-fires would make them visible, and then, at a signal from Dick, they dashed forward.

They got between the redcoats and their weapons in a twinkling and quickly surrounded the enemy.

The redcoats and Tories leaped to their feet, with cries of dismay and amazement.

They found themselves threatened on all sides by the frowning muzzles of muskets.

"Surrender!" cried Dick, in a loud, ringing voice. "Don't try to offer resistance; if you do, it will be the worse for you! Surrender!"

The majority of the redcoats and Tories had pistols in their belts, but they did not dare attempt to draw the weapons.

They were caught at a great disadvantage and realized that any attempt on their part to offer resistance would be suicidal.

It was galling, of course, to be caught thus and forced to surrender by a force inferior to their own, but they had been taken by surprise and could not help themselves.

The leader of the redcoats threw up his hands.

"We surrender," he said, "don't shoot!"

"You are wise," said Dick; "it would be folly for you to attempt to resist and would result in death of half your number, at least."

Dick then named five of the youths and told them to take the prisoners' small arms away from them.

This was done, the youths simply unbuckling the belts and taking belts and all.

The small arms were piled with the muskets and then Dick ordered the prisoners to be seated.

They obeyed, dropping to a sitting posture on their blankets in sullen silence.

The leader of the redcoats was very angry.

"See here," he said; "by what right have you done this?"

"By right of might," replied Dick, to whom the question was addressed.

"Who, and what are you?" the redcoat asked.

"We are true-hearted, liberty-loving patriots, each and every one of us," said Dick; "we are known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76.'"

A half-groan escaped the lips of the redcoat.

"The Liberty Boys of '76!" he exclaimed. "If that is the case, it is all up with us."

"It is certainly all up with you so far as your chance of escape are concerned," said Dick; "we have succeeded in making prisoners of you, and we are going to keep you!"

Dick stationed guards over the redcoats and instructed them to shoot any man who attempted to escape.

Then he sent a portion of the force of "Liberty Boys" after the horses.

"Bring the horses here," he said; "there is both grass and water here, and the animals will be at hand in the morning when we want them."

The youths departed on their errand and in the course of an hour returned, leading the horses.

The animals were turned loose to graze at will, and then fifty of the "Liberty Boys" threw themselves down upon their blankets and went to sleep, leaving the other fifty on guard.

The redcoats made no attempt to escape during the night, and early next morning a start was made for Philadelphia.

As the prisoners were on foot, it took nearly two days to reach Philadelphia.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon of the second day, when they were yet two miles from Philadelphia, Dick sent Sam Sanderson on ahead with instructions to find General Washington and inform him of the fact that the "Liberty Boys" were near at hand and that they were bringing a large party of redcoats and Tories as prisoners.

Sam found General Washington at the home of one of the leading patriots of Philadelphia.

This man's home was at the extreme north side of the city, and so in order to be on hand when the "Liberty Boys" entered Philadelphia, the commander-in-chief mounted a horse and rode across and took up a position near the south edge of Philadelphia and on the street that would be traversed by the "Liberty Boys" in entering the city.

It was the proudest day in the lives of Dick and the "Liberty Boys" as they marched into the city with their prisoners.

The commander-in-chief sat erect on his horse and reviewed the procession.

The news of the approach of the "Liberty Boys," with three hundred prisoners, had traveled rapidly, and a great crowd thronged the street as the party made its way along.

Men cheered, children shouted and the women waved scarfs and handkerchiefs.

It was, indeed, a big day for the "Liberty Boys," and they were cheered and cheered again as they marched up the street.

When Dick came even with the commander-in-chief, he rode out of the ranks and approached the great man.

"Well, well, Dick!" exclaimed General Washington, extending his hand which Dick grasped. "I see you hav-

not forgotten your old tricks; where in the world did you find those fellows, anyway?"

"About fifty miles south of here, your excellency," replied Dick; "we came upon them quite by accident, and as it was in our line, we thought we might as well capture them and bring them into camp with us."

The commander-in-chief ran his eyes over the prisoners as they were passing, and then looked at Dick.

"But there must be at least three hundred of those fellows, Dick," he said. "How did you manage to capture them?"

Dick smiled.

"I haven't been with you and worked and fought under your instructions five years without learning something," he said, quietly. "Not having enough of the lion's skin, we used the fox's; we took them by surprise and had them at our mercy almost before they knew we were near. They could not do otherwise than surrender."

A pleased smile lit up General Washington's face for an instant.

The honest and sincere compliment implied by Dick's

words, pleased the man, iron-hearted though as a rule he seemed to be.

"You have done well, Dick," he said, quietly.

THE END.

The next number (44) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' NET; OR, CATCHING THE REDCOATS AND TORIES," by Harry Moore.

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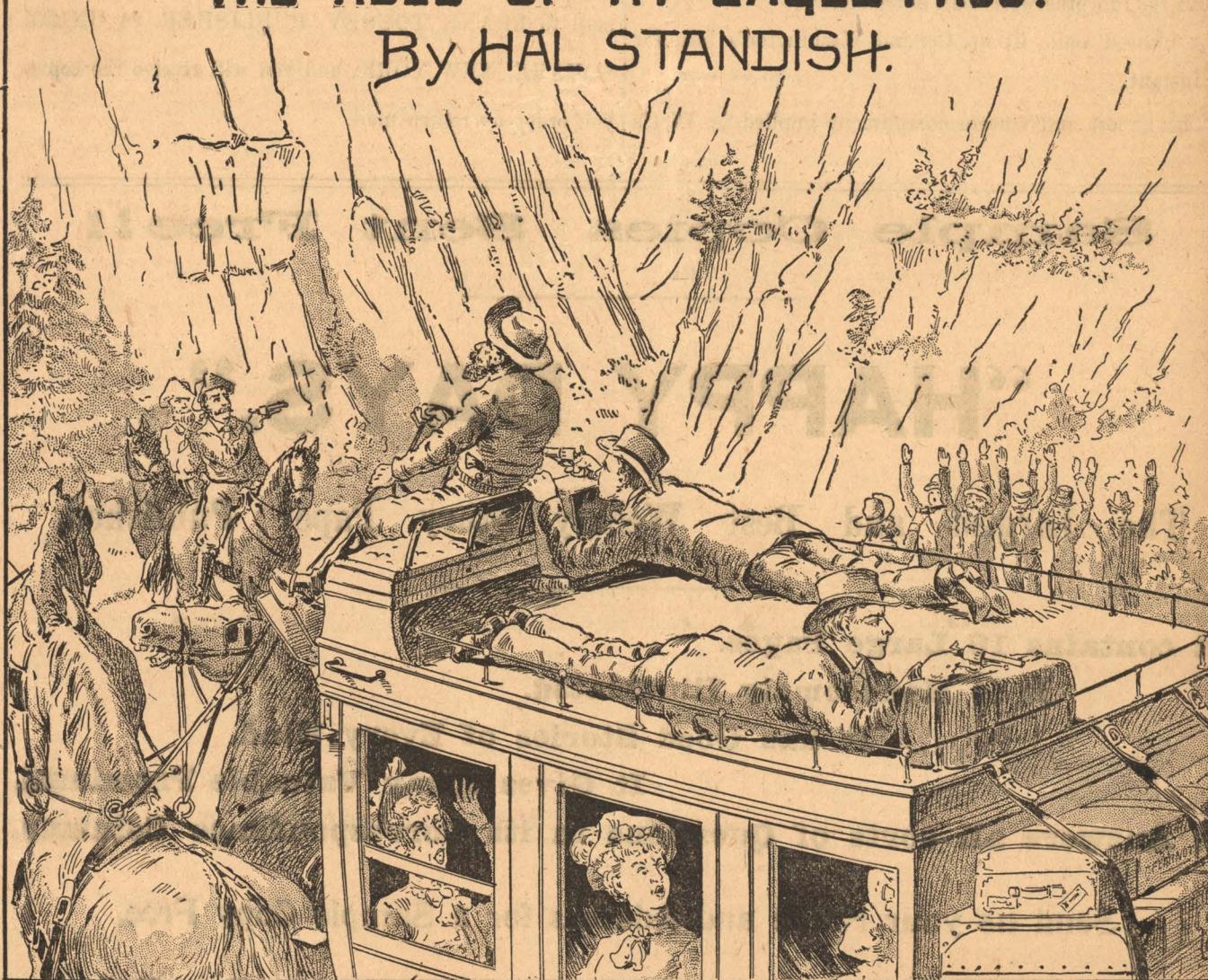
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At the word, "Halt!" Fred tumbled backward from the seat alongside the driver and lay flat on top of the stage. In front of him he had pushed his valise. Joe faced the other way, both lying flat on their stomachs.

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